

The Colorado Quarterly

THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

The Reign of De Gaulle II

HENRY W. EHLMANN

The New France — Janus or Genius?

JESSE BIER

Camus' "The Plague"

WILSON O. CLOUGH

The Spiritual Dilemma of André Gide

NORRIS MERCHANT

Eight Poems by Pasternak

Translated by EUGENE M. KAYDEN

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The reign of De Gaulle II

HENRY W. EHRLMANN

Only hours after our transatlantic plane had landed at the Paris airfield, we stood at the Place de la Concorde, amidst the thousands of Frenchmen who marveled, waved, and shouted at the traditional military parade that opens the frolicking of Bastille Day. As in other years the giant tanks of the last war alternated with showy displays of glistening helmets and sabres belonging to the last century. But then there came streaming down the Champs-Élysées the far less soldierly formations of Mussulman veterans, bedecked with military decorations, holding their hands up in Churchill's V-sign. While the spectators clamored "*L'Algérie Française*," Algerian Boy Scouts marched smartly behind their French sponsors. Enthusiasm reached paroxysm at the sight of the battalions of parachutists who a few weeks earlier had threatened to defy the government of the Republic.

"Oh Monsieur, this time it's different," the foreign bystander was told from many sides. "Now we have him back and he will make order. The parties will have to stop bickering, or else. . . . The circus back there has given its last performance." The circus, the windowless French Parliament building, looked sleepily from across the Seine at the high spirited citizens who in spite of their newly-found unity were ever ready to start fistfights when somebody pushed too hard in trying to get a glimpse of the parade.

Now that the months of dictatorship by consent are over and the National Assembly has for a few days opened its doors to applaud the first government of the Fifth Republic, the time has come to appraise both the dramatic changes which have taken place and the stubborn problems which will not vanish even after the providential leader has waved his magic wand.

Since the storming of the Bastille, drastic reforms, however badly needed, have come about in France mostly through a revolutionary crisis; the more patient ways of legislation or of change in mores have rarely achieved anything lasting. General de Gaulle's own

life has confirmed the lesson taught by his country's history. He has long been convinced that it will always take a "supreme hour" before Frenchmen will heed his poignant warnings and arm themselves adequately to fulfill the mission assigned to them by destiny and by De Gaulle. His first reign had come to an end when he relinquished, almost in a fit of temper, the Presidency of the Provisional Government because the nation, tired from war and occupation, wanted to return to politics and business as usual. Through the difficult war years De Gaulle's tenacity seemed inexhaustible and grew with every new obstacle or enemy. It collapsed, or so it appeared, as soon as he no longer felt carried by popular enthusiasm, which his memoirs describe time and again in near-mystical terms as the source of his strength.

During twelve long years of voluntary withdrawal, the General sounded often like an abused Messiah who had given up hope that he would ever be called upon to set things right. A few weeks before the Algerian mob raided the Governmental Palace, a Cabinet headed by De Gaulle would have gathered less than fifty votes in Parliament. But when after May 13 it turned out that the levers of the state no longer transmitted force and motion and that there was no revolutionary movement from either the Right or the Left capable of filling the vacuum, the task of achieving revolution by law was handed back to the man who had abandoned power in 1946.

Whenever a major crisis has arisen, Frenchmen have habitually reacted to it by drawing up a new constitution, a procedure which has given their country a total of sixteen constitutional texts since 1789. Faithful to this tradition, De Gaulle, only weeks after his resignation in 1946, had described the constitutional framework he considered necessary to end continuous disorder in the affairs of France. Even before the institutions of the Fourth Republic were in place, the General's now famous speech at Bayeux challenged the country to meet the conditions for his return to power, just as years before the defeat of 1940 Colonel de Gaulle had described the conditions of a victory over armored divisions. When the demise of the Republic opened the way to a second reign of De Gaulle, the constitution, drawn up in record time, presented an astonishingly accurate paragraphing of the principles announced at Bayeux. Thereafter De Gaulle accepted few of the changes which his cabinet proposed. Hence, the text submitted to the

referendum corresponded in all essentials to the draft which De Gaulle's legal adviser, the future Premier Michel Debré, had put on paper, assisted by a homogeneous group of young members of the Council of State, that High Administrative Court which was organized by Napoleon and has remained the pride of all French regimes, Bonapartist, republican or monarchist.

If certain articles of the constitution evoke memories of long ago days, it is essentially a document that mirrors the General's philosophy and temper, but also reflects as do all constitutions the immediate past. Each time Frenchmen have sought a republican form of government, they have asked themselves how it would be possible to preserve the democratic privileges of free elections and yet ensure governmental stability in a country where the splintering into ideologically committed factions reflects the divided loyalties of the citizens. The new constitution is a hybrid between the presidential and the parliamentary systems, halfway between the British and the American model, but bearing also much resemblance to the unhappy Weimar Republic of pre-Hitler days. If one had known, some have remarked, that the electorate was willing to accept anything which De Gaulle proposed, one might as well have decided in favor of a popularly elected President who would rule independently of parliamentary majorities.

But it is no accident that De Gaulle and Debré have never advocated such a solution. Whatever might have been George Washington's illusions, the American President if he is to function successfully must be a leader of a nationally rooted party. No such party existed in the summer of last year in France, neither after the Liberation nor after May 13. De Gaulle has come to power on the shoulders of an organized movement. To him the essence of effective rule corresponds to the concept of a paternity, at times benign, at other times stern. In a constitution that was to be De Gaulle's portrait, the President is a monarch who because of certain congenital weaknesses of his subjects cannot detach himself from the exercise of political power, but must at all times tower above the parties. The government has to seek a majority in Parliament. The President is the guardian of the constitution, wise arbitrator between Cabinet and Parliament, between Parliament and the people. To such ends he selects the Premier, can dissolve Parliament and call for a referendum on certain laws. In a na-

tional emergency his powers become enormous, though they remain controlled.

So that Parliament may not enlarge its powers, as it had done gradually in both the Third and the Fourth Republics, the National Assembly finds its sessions shortened and its committee work reduced. On many matters the Cabinet can rule by decree. At the same time, the upper house, the august Senate, is given back many of the powers it held under the Third Republic, when it proved the stumbling block to most reform legislation. Yet it remains elected by indirect suffrage in a way which favors the rural areas, and that means often the least dynamic sections of the country. Similarly the Electoral College, which designates the President of the Republic, is weighed heavily in favor of the smallest communes.

French professors of public law, while admitting that no single clause is in itself pernicious, have almost unanimously called the constitution in its entirety a monster—and a pre-twentieth century monster at that. But defenders and critics alike might attribute far too much importance to constitutional technicalities. Like its predecessors, the Fifth Republic will see the living law under which it functions revised by usages if not by amendments. Certainly a constitution which is definitely tailored to suit one personality cannot help being altered, for better or worse, once De Gaulle no longer dominates the political scene.

In fact the mood of the country combined with the hazards of a new-old electoral system has modified from the outset the conditions under which De Gaulle intended to exercise power in the new state. At present the President of the Republic is supported by so faithful and overwhelming a parliamentary majority that he becomes ruler instead of arbitrator. Whether he wanted it or not, De Gaulle's position today resembles that of an American President with strong backing in Congress.

As soon as the fright of last spring was over and the General was firmly in the saddle, the nation took a vacation from politics and from responsibility. Fascists and right-wing authoritarians found out about it when their Committees of Public Safety crumbled away and could not be brought back to action even when De Gaulle took liberal measures which would have been suicidal on the part of any previous government. Left-of-the-Center Republicans and Communists saw their influence dwindle each time

they criticized the General's policies. Voting fell off considerably between the referendum on the constitution and the elections for Parliament since many Frenchmen felt that once they had approved of De Gaulle's constitution no second plebiscite was needed. Except for the Communists, almost every candidate, whether right, left, or center, claimed that he was a more faithful Gaullist than his competitors. The Cross of Lorraine was not carried above the parties, as De Gaulle has wished, but grabbed by all of them.

In terms of party preferences much less has changed than the distribution of seats in Parliament seems to indicate. The Communists, it is true, lost heavily, although they remained before the run-off elections the strongest single party. Their campaign was singularly listless; the sclerosis that had long befallen their leadership and their organization aggravated the defeat. But most of the other traditional parties of the now despised "system" of the Fourth Republic held their own. Many well-known politicians were beaten in spite of increased popular support for them, mainly because the new party, the *Union pour la Nouvelle République* (U.N.R.), found itself in a strategic position between the two election turns.

Even the electoral success of that party had nothing sensational in it. In all French post-war elections there have been some three million discontented voters who have floated according to circumstances from one party to the other. In the preceding election, less than three years away, Mendès-France and Poujade drew the sympathies of these masses. This time the U.N.R. took over the inheritance, swelled by about one million former Communist sympathizers. Nonetheless it fell considerably short of the votes which the authentically Gaullist party, the R.P.F., had obtained in 1951. That sole and unhappy venture of De Gaulle's in party politics had ended hardly a year after the elections in splits and bitter feuds.

But such a parallel could be misleading. Unlike the R.P.F. the new party is not an opposition movement suffering from the natural appetites of French deputies for ministerial office. It forms the largest single group any French Parliament has known since the end of the Second Empire, while the opposition has shrunk to little more than one-tenth of the seats in the National Assembly. (It is true that the electoral system has led to strange results: a single Communist deputy represents 388,000 voters, a socialist

79,000, but a candidate of the U.N.R. is sent to Parliament by a mere 21,000 voters.)

In the Assembly the U.N.R. forms a motley group: fascists of all varieties and power-seeking opportunists sit next to technocrats, moderate conservatives, and even a few liberals. But they are just as heterogeneous as their voters. If in the past the millions of protest votes merely expressed a bitter "non," they have now uttered a "oui" that is both vague and distinct. For it is a "oui" to General de Gaulle and to little else. Whether in Parliament or in government, the members of the U.N.R. know that the political formation to which they belong owes its strength to an electorate which has voluntarily abdicated politics. However discordant their intimate beliefs might be, for the time being fidelity to De Gaulle can be their only avowed program.

The Republic's first Premier, Michel Debré, has made for years a cult and almost a mania of such fidelity. Born into a prominent Parisian family, a brilliant legal mind who has shown courage during the Resistance and sincerity as an administrator after the Liberation, he would probably abhor the brutalities of a totalitarian regime. But when, during the Fourth Republic, he spoke from the rostrum of the Senate or wrote in his strange and unsuccessful newspaper, *The Courier of Wrath*, his fanaticism was shrill. Everywhere he saw conspiracies against *la patrie* and treason in every treaty by which France abandoned a particle of sovereignty in the interest of a united Europe. For all of his country's allies he would be a disquieting Premier, supported by a disquieting majority in Parliament, if he were the true wielder of power. But even as he faced the National Assembly and explained the government's policy in terms that seemed to deviate deliberately from De Gaulle's announced objectives, the country knew that the affairs of state were decided elsewhere. As long as the Elysée, the Presidential Palace, casts its shadow across the chambers of Parliament, François Mauriac has noted, neither the deputies nor the rest of France will know what is strong and what is weak in the new constitution.

In the domain of economic and social policies there are no mysteries about the intentions of the new regime since the devaluation was announced, trade quotas lifted, taxes raised, subsidies and

social security payments slashed, and, except for the minimum wage rate, all automatic adjustments of wages to rising prices eliminated. From the days of his first term in office after the Liberation, De Gaulle's aloofness to economic problems was known. "The ordnance will follow suit," he is supposed to have haughtily said in order to express his belief in the primacy of political leadership. As a consequence his economic policies became entangled in contradictions soon after he became France's first postwar ruler.

Out of a temperamental affinity to its leitmotiv "Modernization or Decadence," the General backed the bold Plan of Modernization and Equipment, which called for massive public investments in the equipment industries. But not long afterwards he ignored the warnings from Mendès-France and others that under postwar conditions the price of economic expansion was continued austerity. Instead he listened to advisers who, by giving in prematurely to pressures for more consumption, opened flood gates to inflation.

As it turned out, the indecisions of his first year in power were to have lasting consequences. The economic expansion for which the first Four Year Plan had laid the basis has doubled industrial production within ten years and increased the gross national product by 50 percent, a rate of growth unparalleled in France since the mid-nineteenth century. But for all the satisfaction which Frenchmen should have derived from the reading of such statistics, social discontent continued to feed on the iniquities which recurrent inflationary upsets brought in their wake and of which at election time the unabsorbable five million Communist votes were the political expression. Only of late is there visible evidence in the homes, on the highways, and in the streets that prosperity is better distributed, more widely diffused than ever before, with the exception of the critical field of housing, where luxury buildings are mushrooming and workers' dwellings lag behind their quota.

To the outside world the spectacular advances in economic development have often been hidden by the periodical crises which have troubled the country's foreign trade and payments position. Time and again France has had to be bailed out *in extremis* by its friends who were getting understandably restive. Some of these difficulties were inherent in the very conditions of rapid expansion

at home, other were due to the mentality of the French businessmen who are traditionally far less export-minded than their British or German colleagues. On the international market French prices were too high for a variety of reasons: the franc remained overvalued, since in the past every devaluation had resulted in a new inflationary spiral and had thus been useless; an old-established network of protections and privileges had kept intact a system in which prices were determined by the costs of the least efficient producers. The heavy financial burden of the wars in Indo-China and Algeria was only for a time shouldered by American assistance. The chronic budgetary deficits, caused in part by a cumbersome tax system and by costly economic subsidies, added to the problems of a country which, in the midst of a boom, wondered how long it all would last. During the fall of 1958 the Office of European Economic Cooperation had warned France that inflationary pressures continued and should be resisted by a reduction of public expenditures and by a lifting of import restrictions, since experience had shown how difficult it was to slow down inflation if at the same time the lack of foreign currency was sealing the border.

The obligations which the country had assumed by treaty became equally pressing. For years France had been unable to free trade quotas and to make its currency more nearly convertible. The Common Market was to begin operations on January 1, 1959, and the new government has solemnly promised to stand by its signature. Although the Treaty of Rome abolished trade barriers only gradually, France knows that she has to gird herself for an increase in European imports. But a further worsening of the commercial balance may easily lead to a new crisis. Public opinion, nationalistically aroused as it is from many sides, may turn against the Common Market and its political objectives at the very time the government is counting on the active cooperation of German and American banks for the development of African resources.

Operation "Sincerity and Sacrifice" was announced in De Gaulle's grand style when the country was showered with decrees bound to affect every class, group, and citizen. Except for minor details the government followed closely the recommendations of its financial expert, Jacques Rueff, who during his entire career, in and out of government, has moved in high French and inter-

national banking circles. He is proud to identify himself with Poincaré's stabilization of the franc in 1928; it has become tactless to remember that he was also Pierre Laval's adviser during the period of drastic deflation which ultimately led to the social explosion of the Popular Front movement in 1936.

When General de Gaulle imposed Rueff's program on his own far more cautious Minister of Finance, he did so hardly because of a preference for a particular economic philosophy. What must have appealed to him was the internal coherence of the proposal; the grim language by which it called on Frenchmen to adjust their desires to their resources; its brave protests against the ravages of interest groups; and the promises of a rosy, though distant future when even the policies of grandeur could be financed. Moreover the plan exploits to the fullest the political advantages of economic rule by decree. The government obviously wanted to seize upon such an opportunity in some spectacular manner before its broad emergency powers ran out.

Monetary stability is admittedly Rueff's first concern. But to cut the budgetary deficit in half has not only the desired effect of bringing the missing amount more nearly in line with the Treasury's ability to borrow. It also permits restricting consumption, which seems to the government a more hopeful way of fighting inflation than further increases in production and productivity. The elimination of price supports and other subsidies and the opening of new sources of revenue will result directly and indirectly in price increases which amount to a lowering of the present living standard by at least 5 percent. But national averages do not tell the whole story. Since the rise in prices affects mostly items of common consumption, the lower income groups will be hit hardest.

In the words of the London *Economist* De Gaulle's government is "gambling deeply." It expects that prices will rise only to the desired level and not further. Persuasion alone, it is hoped, will suffice to dissuade business firms from passing on to the consumer the increase in costs which devaluation and other measures have caused. Employers are encouraged not to give in to demands for wage increases by which their workers may seek compensation for higher living costs. In the past such expectations have always been frustrated since customarily capital and labor have found in inflation the easiest way out of difficulties. At present a mild recession,

which moved some months ago from across the Atlantic to most of Western Europe, might facilitate the government's task. Though the government seems not unhappy about a moderate decline in business activity, it must again gamble on being able to prevent a more serious recession. For, if shorter working hours or unemployment were to cut further into the earnings of workers and employees, who already have to wrestle with higher prices and reduced social security payments, industrial unrest may spread. The extreme weakness of a divided and anemic labor movement is another asset for the government, but French social history is strewn with surprises.

Will the devaluation enable French industry to expand into new markets? Will the less competitive firms and branches of the economy prove capable of adapting themselves to the new conditions? Will the climate of confidence which the new Republic seeks to create convince French and foreign capital that the time for massive investment has come? On all these counts the government displays official optimism, but the test will have to be met in the months to come. Rueff defends himself against the reproach of preaching deflation by pointing out that the new budget has in fact increased public investments over the figures of last year. But public investments will not nearly be sufficient to undertake the multiple tasks which the Rueff Report assigns to the country for the future: the development of the Sahara, the raising of living standards in all overseas territories, the "modernization of armament" (i.e. an atomic arsenal), the expansion of energy resources, modernization of production in many fields, improvement of the conditions for scientific research, curing the "cancer" of insufficient housing, etc. The Ministry of Finance has not hesitated to produce, as if by prestidigitation, an impressively high figure of capital which is expected to come out of hoarding or to find its way back from voluntary exile abroad. Foreign capital, it is predicted, will join in, and the Paris stock exchange will regain its prewar importance.

If this is a pleasant forecast, it remains for the time being not more than a bet, albeit a decisive one. De Gaulle's prestige at home and abroad is certainly strong enough to carry the experiment through its unavoidable initial trials. In many ways the policies which France is now pledged to follow are entirely in line with the neo-liberalism which was first applied with such apparent suc-

cess by Western Germany. Today its creed and climate have pervaded the offices which preside over the gradual integration of western European economies; most of the cartels which in many cases form the backbone of agreements between the six member nations of "Little Europe" (France, Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries) have applauded the new orientation of the French government. One of the most subtle minds among French financial experts has for some time praised the virtues of "concerted economy," based on a general understanding between expansion-minded business, the managers of the nationalized sectors of the economy, and the technicians employed by national and international bureaucracies.

Inasmuch as the French experiment adapts itself deliberately to trends that have waxed strong among the country's neighbors and partners, it may derive strength from such accord. But as yet the structure of the French economy remains different in many respects and today, in other countries too, the postwar prosperity which fathered neo-liberalism may be receding.

But even if one assumes that under the most favorable circumstances the government wins its present gamble, the measures which it has adopted may hamper rather than help the solution of a number of grave long-range problems. It is not likely that policies which put monetary stability above all other concerns will provide the sustained rate of economic growth which France needs even more than other Western countries. Before the recent upturn its economic development had been retarded for decades, and since the war France has been undergoing a demographic revolution of the first order: population has jumped from 40 to 44 millions with a more than proportionate increase in the younger age groups; all this means a vastly enlarged demand, both actual and prospective. The "moderate" rate of growth which in the opinion of Rueff and of his colleagues is the hallmark of "civilized" nations will not suffice, especially not while the countries of eastern Europe advance annually by 8 to 10 percent. Similarly the market mechanism on which the government wants to rely almost entirely will hardly direct capital flow where it is most needed—the sad story of housing is there to prove it.

Nobody could expect that with one stroke the government would tackle all of the overdue reforms which its predecessors had endlessly debated but had never been strong enough to carry out.

However the flood of recent decrees actually contains a number of would-be reforms which, by giving precedence to the solution which was financially least onerous or met with least resistance, will have blocked the way to the needed fundamental changes for a long time to come. Here the long awaited democratization of the educational system and the organization of scientific research are cases in point. But there are other examples which could sooner or later make Frenchmen believe that all the Fifth Republic has to offer is a new style—and what is left to them is a new style—of cynicism and resignation.

One of the greatest hindrances to the normal functioning of French democracy has long been the "secession" of the working class from political society, an alienation of which Communist voting strength was only one symptom. Even if there should be no strikes or revolts, it is already clear that the workers consider the new budget and its consequences for their own pocketbook the reenactment of the same old story: the rich soak the poor until the poor grow strong enough to strike back. Should the workers come to feel that they are once more completely excluded from determining the conditions of their existence, the government's fanciful schemes for profit-sharing in capitalist enterprise will do little to assuage such feelings.

After all is weighed and said, what holds true of the constitutional solutions the regime has to offer remains true of its economic policies. The limited choices which are available, the lack of acceptable alternatives have strengthened the position of the government and weakened its critics. You do not like De Gaulle's constitution? Do you want to exchange it for the concentration camps of the Algerian extremists or a military dictatorship? You distrust the effects of economic liberalism? Do you prefer runaway inflation, bankruptcy, or an autarky that will isolate France from the free world?

Over every question and every answer looms the unsolved problem of the war in Algeria.

To maintain that nothing has changed in Algeria, because no end to the war is in sight, is to forget that on May 13 the Army was in revolt against Paris, while today civilian rule and military discipline have been restored. Today Algiers is once more on Paris

time; last spring it was the reverse. Nonetheless the life of the Fifth Republic remains strongly conditioned by the two factors which together set in motion the revolution of last May: the politization of the Army and the ingrained fear of the French settlers that one day the mother country will abandon them.

Twelve years of colonial wars have changed the physiognomy of an Army which, after the compromising outcome of the Dreyfus Affaire at the turn of the century, had retired to the position of the "great mute." Officers and men found out that to fight a guerilla war, first in Indo-China and then in Algeria, against a fanatic nationalist emancipation movement, which belonged to either the Communist or the Arab universe, meant to engage in political warfare with all its psychological demands. Many of the patriotic slogans of another age revealed their futility and were replaced by confused notions drawn frequently from the totalitarian arsenal. In the words of a young officer, "How can one ask us to enact Corneille in Kafka-like surroundings?"

In the eyes of the soldiers, the government of the Republic failed to understand the conditions of the battle; they believed that discord in Paris, not the objective factors of world politics, were driving France out of its Empire which the Army had first been asked to defend at great sacrifice. If at the political center the breakdown of will continued, then the Army would have to play the role of an arbiter between contending forces and impose its rule though nobody was able to define concretely the essence of such rule. Because of their own uncertainties, it was a relief to most officers when last spring another arbiter became available although they seemed to have been divided as to their personal sympathies for De Gaulle. At least for the time being captains and colonels are no longer given to speculations about suitable forms of a totalitarian state. But the politization of the Army can hardly subside as long as the Algerian war lasts; unlike millions of Frenchmen who have voluntarily retired from political responsibility the Army has not bestowed its confidence on De Gaulle unconditionally. The lack of political authority which drove the Army to revolt has ceased. But the officers serving in Algeria expect to be given the power and the means to carry on indefinitely the labors of a benevolent paternalism in the pacified regions and to crush elsewhere the FNL (National Liberation Front) militarily or psychologically.

Before the events of last May drove them together, there was little love lost between the Army and the French *colons* in Algeria. De Gaulle was considered with outright suspicion by those who had made themselves the *colons'* intransigent spokesmen. During the Second World War, De Gaulle seemed to favor a federalist organization for the overseas territories. Afterwards, at a time when some of the leaders of the Fourth Republic were never able to agree on principles and practice for a North-African policy and when others sought to refurbish their prestige by riding the nationalist tide, De Gaulle kept an icy silence. Future historians will have to elucidate how in spite of deep mutual suspicion the forces working for De Gaulle's return to power and those committed to the fight for *L'Algérie Française* found themselves temporarily united, each side seemingly confident that it was better placed to delude the other.

Ever since then a strange semantic battle has been going on, as if the solution to the Algerian tragedy depended on choosing the right word. The ultras in Algeria and their friends in France want to commit the government to a policy of "integration," which would forever make Algeria a province like Brittany or Alsace-Lorraine. Soustelle, minister in both De Gaulle's and Debré's cabinet, had warned earlier that any policy which "does not lead to integration will finally lead to independence." But De Gaulle himself has never pronounced the magic word. Hence his every speech is being scrutinized to derive encouragement or to cry betrayal.

In his astonishing speech at Conakry last August the General offered national independence to those overseas territories that asked for it. If he wanted thereby to set his country firmly on a course of de-colonization, he must also have known that throughout Africa independence is spreading as by contagion, even where no bloodshed has infected the atmosphere. At times he has spoken about the "personality of Algeria" that is to be developed "in close association with France"; at others he has warned against putting any trust in any formula or slogans.

There can be little doubt that whether or not De Gaulle sees at present the outlines of a solution in Algeria, all of his acts and omissions are designed to increase his possibilities for maneuver and to ward off interference with his freedom of decision. During the war years De Gaulle showed himself a past master in the art of

cunning, which his earliest writings had praised as the art of the gifted leader. Today his choice of words and of collaborators, his empirical groping, his realism, which does not explain away the continuing seriousness of the situation, might prepare another victory for such crafty tactics. What matters is that enough residual strength is left to the President when the time for decision comes. In that respect the parallel with the war years is not convincing. Then every step nearer to Allied victory in the West meant liberation of new French territory and thereby an almost automatic increase of De Gaulle's authority. There is nothing similarly automatic about such an increase in strength now.

During the days of the Fourth Republic, De Gaulle used to say that Algeria was too great a problem for too weak a regime. But strong though his regime is at present, it also would wear itself out if the war in Algeria were to go on for many years while on both sides nationalist feelings were exasperated. The refusal by the rebel leaders to negotiate a cease-fire and the outcome of the elections in Algeria have actually been serious defeats for the General and have compromised his position. To a considerable extent these defeats were intended and prepared by the intransigent forces among the French and the Mussulmen who have played into each other's hands as they have done often before. Though De Gaulle now fully understands that not one of the Moslem deputies whom premature elections have sent to the National Assembly can be regarded as a valid interlocutor, he insists that the new Algeria must be built in coöperation with elected representatives of the Algerian people. But is there hope that in the midst of a civil war, elections—sabotaged by one side and supervised by the other—can become the prelude to peace?

In 1958 the accidents of the historical moment made it possible for De Gaulle to tame the frustrated nationalist feelings on both sides of the Mediterranean and to foil the designs of those who had invoked the blessings of totalitarian government. But nationalism has remained the strongest single force in present-day France; the dangerous slogans coined by one of De Gaulle's ministers stating that the loss of Algeria would condemn France to decadence seem to have been accepted by a large segment of the population. The traditional anti-Republican Right—composed of a dozen strands—has moved closer to power; but it knows that it has not grasped it. When Jacques Soustelle was given none of the

Ministries wielding true authority and when the President hinted ever so lightly at the possibility of having one day to dissolve Parliament (a Parliament in which the Gaullists come close to a majority), the prevailing distribution of power became evident enough. However, only as long as De Gaulle's independence remains intact can he hope to control forces that wait for the decline of his prestige either to win him over to their position or to replace him with a more tractable providential savior.

The greatest danger for the new Republic would arise if the economic policies ran on shoals, social unrest grew, and at the same time hostilities in Algeria dragged on with no end in sight. Then it might still become true that in the process of making nine million Mussulmen into Frenchmen, forty-five million Frenchmen had to lose their freedom. If the democratic forces remain as they are at present, divided, disheartened, without leadership and unsure of their following, another grave crisis would benefit only the extremists on the Right, possibly supported by politically sensitized elements in the Army.

But no such catastrophes need occur. "De Gaulle is the geometrical point of our impotence and of our contradictions," Sartre has written, explaining thereby the uniqueness of De Gaulle's position. The age-old question, whether Frenchmen want to be ruled or prefer to be forever rebellious to authority, was discussed by Tocqueville more than a century ago. It has once more been decided in favor of submission. When the divisions of opinion become unbearable, when the lack of respect for political institutions turns into a despised lack of self-respect, a nation of skeptics starts believing in miracles. For what is expected of De Gaulle is little short of miraculous: continuing economic expansion while leaving undisturbed the enjoyment of acquired positions; providing for the oncoming population surge and raising living standards; making peace in Algeria and attaining a prominent place for France in the concert of nations.

But these are the kind of miracles that have to be paid for. The high price Frenchmen will have to pay for their freedom calls for changes that are more difficult to enact than the articles of a constitution or ordinances regulating prices, wages, and subsidies: a far greater civic responsibility of individuals and groups; an understanding that reforms cannot be fought over continuously as from one barricade to the next; a pragmatic appraisal of

the opportunities and dangers of the moment without constant reference to the dogmas of a turbulent past.

He who walks the streets of France today, who observes, questions, and listens, has grounds for apprehension but not for despair.

RIME

By ROBERT L. TYLER

Science says: precision is neater, better,
And words are like holes on IBM cards
To name the speeding stars for the setter
More reliably than cries of the bards.
We primitive Platos are starved quite thin
On such epistemological fare
When all old music of wonder and sin
Is teapot whistling, not a prophet's blare.

Can rime be rime without its old ambition;
Not mapping the ways of God to man,
Nor painting an Eden for man's contrition,
Nor fashioning charms against great wild Pan?
Now we hang up lights on trees in a park,
Gavotte in tinsel inside a rim of dark.

The new France: Janus or genius?

JESSE BIER

In the now famous *coup d'état* of last spring, General de Gaulle actually did save France from a civil war that had already commenced with the French Algerian army's seizure of Corsica. On May 12, 1958, while I was in Paris, loyal contingents of the city's police lay barbed wire matting all the length of Le Bourget airfield and set up light howitzers to repel imminent paraplane attack. It is no secret anymore that the Pflimlin government readied plans for withdrawal to some location in the northern coal country, close to the Belgian border. In such an atmosphere, indeed situation, the General's public announcement that he agreed to come to immediate power forestalled bloodshed and delivered the country. But in so doing, he inevitably tied himself to the colonial integrationist forces, for he assumed power virtually under their auspices. And that fact prevents his solution of the Algerian question, the very problem that put him where he is. The contradiction holds him in a vise: he can talk with as much eloquence or anguish as he wishes, but he cannot act.

His dilemma is all the more apparent since the Parliamentary elections of last December, which routed the honest opposition of Mendès-France, Mitterand, and Bourgès-Manoury. He has been deprived of his good enemies, whose value it always is to supply one with a pressure against which he may formulate his policy, form his power. The result is that the President of the Fifth Republic cannot very well form his power now in resistance to the victors of his own side, so that he is in the anomalous political circumstance of being surrounded by his "friends," cut off by his sponsors. And that is because, among other things, there was either passion or mindlessness in the election campaign, with very little exercise of the French sense of objective realism and no attempt to air and resolve basic paradoxes facing the nation.

Contradiction has continued to inhere in all that has happened since De Gaulle's emergence. The African dependencies, save

Guinea, voted *oui* to his constitution of last December, but the "evolutionary" role granted them is bound to produce drives for separate independence or a blackbelt federation in the foreseeable future. In other words, the savior of the French Union has already started a process of modified disintegration, so that now the only question becomes one of time—which has a way of running fast in the current century. At home he has promised France a full and continuing prosperity, but his devaluation of the franc and the corresponding wage-freeze have begun to work real hardship on lower and middle income groups, who wonder what has happened. Himself the symbol of resistance to Germany, De Gaulle personally chose the present French foreign minister from the Bonn embassy. Meanwhile France goes more and more heavily into West Germany's financial debt under the new regime, a debt used in part to defray operations in Algeria, where basic issues remain unsolved.

And so full-circle to Algeria, toward which the French attitude continues schizophrenic. The majority of French insist, as they have insisted all these recent years, on holding fast to Algeria—because of certain legalisms, or because of justice . . . or because of oil. Differences within this majority have involved the question of means only. Some have advocated liberal measures, like the *loi cadre* of Felix Gaillard, for the *département*, as the whole group continues to refer to Algeria; their liberalism is cautious and almost always compulsively late. Others go on arguing for more repressive military policy to crush an aggressive faction of Mussulmen, who are simply trying to institutionalize gangsterism. Thus, France has liberalized a little and pressurized much, and the alternation of policies has satisfied no one fundamentally. Moreover, nothing has changed, except for increased censorship. No offer of independence, of course, has come—or could come—from De Gaulle; no "evolutionary" role even could be tended to Algeria. In fact, there has yet to be a formal recognition of FLN leaders so that rebels may be talked to. They are "honorable" rebels, all honorable men; and the General asks them, somewhat gloriously, to end the senseless struggle. His words are high, but he can give no real inducement, for his Parliament is committed to departmental integration, and he seems committed only to generalization.

Meanwhile, there is the other side, the minority of French, who

in either a nerveless or masochistic fashion call down vengeance for past European colonialism on poor France's head. They discount the fact that France built as well as exploited, placed a cultural bulwark in North Africa against real enough Communist agitation and new Arabian fascism, and indeed capitalized and created the now palpable oil fields. These Frenchmen gaze weakly over the old Blue Sea, sighing in an expiration of despair and simple disengagement.

Here in the central, draining problem for France, the French gifts of objective realism, of magnanimity, and of concerted approach have been conspicuous by their absence. Division and paradox continue as before, and no hero—even a reincarnated, masculinized maid of Orleans, if that is the case—can resolve the situation. The dilemma cannot be resolved even superficially anymore. What is actively involved here, as elsewhere, is something deeper: the very character of the present-day French. It is this character that continues to rule—or vitiate—the government. The French cannot be rescued basically from their external difficulties, for they need to rescue themselves. But for the time being there remain only the persistent contradictions and confusions of French political life and, deeper, of the whole national consciousness, especially since World War II.

Indeed, the political reflection of the continuous and deep French division of mind is nowhere more apparent than in the change of governmental mechanics under the new constitution. All these past years the endless superdebate on parliamentary government has proceeded from *crise* to *crise*. The old system was defended as the very essence of precious democratic representation. Beset, however, with its self-generated contradiction—where the key Socialists made the worst showing¹—the system collapsed. Now the French have gone to the other extreme. They have a President of truly premier rank, but they are uneasy. For they have invested a potential dictator and not erected simply a strong executive. They had grown weary of the one system and then all at once had become impassioned for the other extreme. They have cause to be worried, for should their benevolent hero die tomorrow, the newly constituted system poses a threat as vicious as the older system had been chaotic and moribund. There has been change, but no fundamental resolution.

The friend of France keeps hoping that the country has not

really two heads but two masks only, and that she will presently drop both of them and reveal her genuine face. Such self-disclosure, a rather dramatic but possible act of vindication, would contain that genuine French sense of flair we always welcome. Meanwhile, we see only the heatedness and fixity of the one expression and the dullness and vacuity of the other, the masks of bathos and inanity that are being worn in French national life today. The matter is one, finally, of twentieth century French character, a truly internal affair at a deeper level than politics.

The shifting divergence between an impassioned and often anachronistic group behind the one mask and an agglomerating mass of weary, dulled Frenchmen behind the other is apparent elsewhere in the country's recent and less excited development. On one side is the restricted subscription program that has practically refurbished the celebrated Palais de Versailles. The program was eminently successful in its appeal to those who yearn for the amplitude and pride of *anciens* days. What inspires them is precisely the weight and breadth of the Palais, as if that pile speaks for them yet as it spoke for its builders. The masonry has been almost reanimated to say something simple and durable to and for these French, like—"We are *here*." But the symbolism is basically empty. Those few native tourists to the site, who mingle with the many foreigners there to see the curiosity, stroll quickly through the gardens and go home to their new architecture, which is really here and now, however unaesthetic. Theirs is the style of the apartment houses pressing up all over France in the modern Grotesque Mode, boxlike and façadeless. Some Frenchmen make no concessions to the present, as if to restore monuments were all that was needed to overtake time and all value. Those of the other view count the number of stories to judge how fine the new is, without any desire to relate it to the old right next to it. No heritage exists to bring them up sharply to the discordances, artistic and philosophical, all about them. They move and have their being in flats, flatly.

Where is a realistic median state of mind between the extremes, in the architecture of the country as elsewhere? You cannot find it anymore, even as it could be found only twenty years ago. That was when the modernistic Trocadero was built, but it was built spaciouly and with a living relationship to its surroundings. Since then the wide perspective of its esplanade has been destroyed,

crowded by a jerry-built huddle of prefabricated NATO office structures. The second face of France does not see any damage or loss; the first face still cries that the original Trocadero should never have been built at all.

The same hard resistance or resentment, on the one side, and the soft thoughtlessness, on the other, are seen in France's reactions to things American. There is now a segment of population almost professionally engaged in deploring or ridiculing America or American influences. Even aside from those attacks occasioned by Little Rock or superior Russian Sputniks, the antagonism is a set one. It is apparent in the slightly derogatory asides of TV reporters and in journals of all the variant persuasions; in the sketches of nightclub and music-hall entertainers who elaborate their several satires on differing aspects of "the American way of life"—during the tourist off-season, anyway; in the maniacal fringe that blames every evil on America, now particularly blaming the change in the weather on cumulative American A-bomb exercises; in the constant Leftist denigration of our narrow Social Security program and the like; and finally among a host of conservatives, of dress as well as politics, who consistently bewail American carry-overs into French life, as if the very insistence of condemnation might be enough to cancel a certain inevitable influence of the West's leading power.

Meanwhile, at Cannes, American bluejeans—washed, faded, and even patched—sell for the equivalent of about sixteen American dollars—and those, together with native variations, are bought and sported by the slavish *fadists* everywhere. The impassioned and resistant face of France, as seen in the writings of M. André Siegfried, scowls defiantly at the cultureless materialism of the United States, but there is a relentless influx of pinball machines, juke-boxes, neon "Snack Bars," popcorn ("Maïs de Californie": it's good for the "santé"), gaudy Esso gas stations, and the latest miniature golf ranges. M. Siegfried's mask of alarm is not matched but rather discountenanced by M. Publique's pasteboard smile of acceptance—and by the public's derivative American costume these days, including "mocassins de Iowa" and "pantalons de Texas."

The fact, of course, is that not all the newness in France may be attributed to Americanization—not even most of it. What has struck France full force over the last decade is not America so

much as it is mechanization, motorization, and a whole panoply of effects following higher and higher powered commercialization and technology. There are momentous effects of motorization, for example, but the cause and the effects are part of the times, not America's doing. The fact that so many Frenchmen do not know this is a comment on their loss of realism and objectivity.

Two developments illustrate what is happening to France's social-cultural life these days. On the farms there are really more tractors than horses and oxen. In the cities, the automobile is triumphant. These are harmless enough facts. But in the Garonne countryside, for instance, where there used to be regular and ritualistic gatherings of neighbors to harvest a crop, now a single machine does it all quickly; there is no celebratory dinner at the end of each day, but only a maximum of speed and a minimum of human contact. And in a city like Toulouse, the ample Place Wilson sidewalk has been chiseled away to a narrow *trottoir* for the pedestrians and café sitters, in order to create a wider roadway for the auto traffic. Everywhere the exigencies of mobility, acceleration, and efficiency put vital custom under tread and conquer ease, nonchalance, and social habit. Such relatively harmless facts produce real enough transforming consequences, yet the causes and the effects are not all America's example but are inevitable responses to the tempo of the century.

The modifying answer to the situation lies not in M. Siegfried's high-toned reactions, as posited in the February, 1958, issue of *Le Figaro*, nor in the public's heedlessness. Yet, one almost concludes that the heedlessness is in direct proportion to the oversophisticated and outdated panaceas of such intellectuals as M. Siegfried. Or, to put it the other way around, M. Siegfried's note of frustration and slight frenzy is due to the fact that people like him are not so widely read anymore. And that is not because of America's pernicious influence, but because the times are providing the new slick magazines at the corner *kiosks*.

But I must be fair and admit that it is the times André Siegfried attacks, too. As a matter of fact, he conscientiously turns his gaze toward the past, yesterday's Greece, for example. Meanwhile, his would-be public faces another way, however—blindly toward the future and the West. There must be some solid ground between the opposing perspectives. Somewhere, again; there must

be a middle plane for the old French realism and spirit to rest on, somewhere between wilful delusion and will-lessness.

Nonetheless, of the two extremes, the one calls for an answer, at least, whereas the other is not even aware of the questions. And so it is to M. Siegfried's position that I return, the articulated one that at least commands some interest. For it is he, and those of his side, who speak interestingly of France's "mission." Let us, he cries, maintain the dignity of "pure thought"—a variation of famous French "logic"—and let us recapture or sustain the truly humanistic tradition. Let the French hold fast to France's historic mission, more than ever now when France is being squeezed between the two "barbarian" national powers of earth. He speaks eloquently if not very originally, and he deserves a reply.

My answer, as I have implied, is that there is another face, a third or, perhaps, the true face between the two masks. This is the country's genius in the midst of Janus. What is its wisdom and what is its angle of vision?

Its wisdom is to evoke the Man between the hero and the non-entity. Its wisdom is Presentness which joins past and future. It is not, for instance, in blackmailing and reducing Algeria or safely giving it up but in meeting it head-on with timely intelligence that France will show its true face; not in recurring to the old Parliamentary anarchy or yet in investing a virtual dictator but in imaginative and controlled Constitutional reform for some Sixth Republic that France will display its genius; not in dreaming of old Versailles or shutting itself up in its radically new beehives but in a wide-eyed harmonizing of the new with the old that it will be wise; not in stillborn resistance to or mindless acceptance of Americanization and mechanization and not in talk of Greece or in no talk at all but in rediscovering its realistic sense of balance that it will find again its true role.

Its wisdom is neither to over-accentuate the will nor to be incognizant of human agency in the destiny of a people: its wisdom is to know what little positive—and therefore momentous—work that will and character can do to bring up what is instinctual to the level of articulated value where its chances of endurance are better. Better because it is not from the top of the head alone but from the whole body social, and better because it is not brutally buried out of the range of refurbishing memory and mind. Its wisdom is to recapture its sense of national equilibrium between

extremes, by asserting the mean between tragic nostalgia run to bathos and rocklike fatalism run to inanity. To recall that theoretical wisdom, to activate it, is half of France's mission and potential strength. The other half of its strength must come from what has been its unique angle of vision.

And that vision is where? It can be seen along the highways, where the trees are cut and carefully pruned on every road. It is in the parks, all the parks, where the marvelous garden *parterres* are scrupulously planned and set out each spring. For what strikes the outsider is the spirit of French cultivation, of civilized man at ease with nature, of the salvational Gallic sense of domesticated beauty. In the cities and along the roads and among the hills, one sees this instinctual sense of and struggle for beauty. There is the maintained workaday humanism instructive to barbarians, and a lesson so well kept in France that it is guarded like a secret. But it ought to be a practice printed on all the rest of France's development and broadcast to everyone.

And where else is the clear eye looking? On the streets and along the quais and under the lamplights—all places where the lovers are, in their public embrace, and where even white and black stroll arm in arm. What the outsider admires most is that inward and most liberating of freedoms—which need not have a connection with the political individualism turned wild in the forum. It is this personal liberty that tells on the foreigner and explains why, for example, all good Americans still go to Paris when they die. This reflex of private freedom and magnanimity, uncramped by communitarian pressures of American life or by Marxist strictures in Russia, is as fit a lesson as any other and calls for as much dignification.

The wisdom of the regained mean, of a pliant realism fusing French idealism and materialism and of a Presentness mediating between nostalgia and futurism—this is what France can rediscover. A saving sense of widespread cultivation and beauty, and the reflex of personal freedom and generosity consciously made vigorous—these are visions of what France may give. They are all one can expect from her now—all of her mission—but, of course, they are enough, more than enough, almost all there is to ask.

Yet the remorseless mechanization and acceleration of modern life continue; even in France where there was peace, there is pace. How may we rescue the beautiful; how may we, as *human* beings,

cultivate our park gardens and our aesthetic sense and—maybe—souls as well? The increase of population, the confounding complications of contemporary existence, and the mounting paradoxes of world politics go on; even in France, where there was wholeness and relation, there is fragmentation and confusion. How may we remain private and expressive beings, free and not suffocated people? How may we recover our balance, seize the present moment, and protect our individual selves with realism? Here is the value of France, its mission to a twentieth century civilization needing delicate but persuasive restraint from barbarism. It will be a mission *manqué*, as they say in France, unless the two French masks of Janus fall away, exposing the true face between them.

I hasten to add that such a possibility is not purely rhetorical either. One is reminded of a brief but cheering incident of last November, when De Gaulle pinned France's highest decoration on visiting Winston Churchill. The French had long maintained a split attitude toward that English and Allied leader, as they have toward almost everything else. But now De Gaulle's act was a vindication, after all, of his own magnanimity and sense of realistic debt to the Briton. If the incident symbolized universal French praise for a man who has indeed been France's critic as well as friend, then there are signs of reactivated French character at its best: its generosity, its realistic sense of measurement. In such a case, the national mind has undergone not change merely but resolution.

But, with the rest, this is not the General's work, but general work. It is a matter for all the French. In a way, one hopes, without bad will for the man himself, that De Gaulle will fail in a single-handed rescue of his country. One hopes that the hero will prove anachronistic or otherwise unavailing for the people, and that they will be driven back upon themselves once again to rediscover their internal strengths. It is only then that France will be able to put forth its one tolerant, reasonable live face. Only in such a general way can the genius of the country materialize once more, with features for everyone to love and copy.

FOOTNOTE

¹For years, especially under Mollet's premierships, the Socialists made a practice of prosecuting the Algerian war in exchange for modified economic

reforms at home. Thus, in principle a party dedicated to pacifism or, at least, international good will engaged in political-economic trading in order to gain temporary and ultimately unavailing power. In this way it abandoned its constituency, who were left in the final crisis to vote either for the Communists or the De Gaullists.

THE HEART NO CHANGELING

By ADDIE M. HEDRICK

Only the bluejay and the cardinal
Come to the garden fountain, now, to preen,
And they but briefly; withering annuals sprawl,
But cling tenaciously to the final green;
These are the changeling days when mornings read
The white, imperial edict of the frost
In silver hieroglyphs of flower and weed,
Yet noon insists that summer is not lost.
Even as I, denying time and season,
And all intransigence, turn hopefully
Toward light footfall; credulous past reason
Of mind's deceit, the senses' trickery;
Holding that miles between may bind together;
Proving the heart no changeling like the weather.

Wreath and sword

HEINZ HERRMANN

During the past decades several generations have been identified in the United States. They have been named the "lost," the "found," or the "beat" generations and have been classified and duly analyzed from a sociological and literary point of view. Members of such generations made their groups distinct in the ordinary social scene by giving their thoughts and their particular brand of discontent with existing trends in society some form of expression.

The European cultural theater seemed remarkably free of this "generation" phenomenon. Certainly there was intellectual ferment, but simultaneous currents and countercurrents in one and the same generation prevented the prevalence of a single trend. In Europe, social or political maladjustments were often borne for a long time only to erupt later with a force which transcended the boundaries of generations and involved the adult, as well as the aged and the adolescent.

In contrast to these established "generations made in the USA," a movement, comprising a significant fraction of central European youth, has come and gone without leaving an imprint in the annals of more recent cultural history. Its origin is to be found in the gatherings of some youngsters in Steglitz, a good middle-class suburb of Berlin. A student of law, Karl Fischer, and a few upper-class Gymnasiasten (students attending a schoolform for the ages from ten to eighteen) got together in 1897 for hikes on Sundays and holidays and for vacations in the out-of-doors. On weekends they began to explore the woods and streams near Berlin, spending the nights in haylofts and strawbins. They turned to nature for recreation, leaving behind the sticky beergardens and the gray confines of their unattractive schools. In 1901 this slowly growing community became organized as an association called "Die Wandervögel" ("Birds of Passage"), which increased its membership during the subsequent years until it reached the peak of its devel-

opment in the late 1920's.¹ In 1923 there appeared a comprehensive publication, *Das Wandervogelbuch*, Greifenverlag, which defined the aims and ideas of this movement. At that time other youth groups, segments of the Boy Scouts, denominational youth groups, and smaller independent organizations began to follow more or less the pattern set by the "Wandervögel." Together these groups converged into a characteristic, though loose, organization of many of the youth of Germany and Austria.

Historically the roots of the Youth Movement reach back into the nineteenth century, which seems dotted by landmarks which are, by and large, attempts to grasp and understand our universe by oversimplification. Marx's economic theory of history, Freud's interpretation of human behavior as the result of sexual drives, Wagner's dramatic conception of music, the biologists' evolutionary theory of life, and the physicists' thermodynamic theories all seem to be cases in point. Carried to their logical conclusions, these theories were brilliantly conceived insights into limited aspects of the universe or of human existence. However, the towering ideologies which evolved from these lines of thought were essentially exclusive, narrow, and as ultimate interpretations of reality almost absurd.

Another group of thinkers and writers of this period who contributed much in shaping the transition from the last to the present century have been spoken of as "the disinherited minds," following Rilke's lines in the *Duino Elegies*:²

Each torpid turn of the world has such disinherited children
To whom no longer what's been and not yet what's coming belongs.

What the Youth Movement had to offer as a solution of the seemingly intractable problems of its time seemed at first perhaps entirely unrelated to prevalent ideologies. That life was meaningful was never questioned by the members of this group. Meaning was derived from the manifold relations which existed everywhere on this earth. It could be experienced in the relationship of man to nature. It could be experienced in human comradeship, and it was present whenever help was brought to living creatures. The continuous awareness of these relations anchored the individual firmly in the universe—an existentialist loneliness was inconceivable.

In creating the experience of relatedness, the youth turned toward nature. They learned to distinguish intellectually the subtle signals of living existence: the meaning of animal tracks, the sounds of birds, and the seasonal changes of flowers and trees. They also learned to experience emotionally the natural environment: the fragrance of a pine cove, the sounds of cascading waters, and the sunlight refracted in a dew drop on the tip of a grass-blade. The relation of man to nature was often heightened by arduous mountain climbs and nights spent under starlit skies.

Human relationships were emphasized by the personalities of the leaders of these youth groups. The leaders were not primarily administrative and pedagogic officers. Between them and their young followers existed strong and specific bonds ranging from comradeship to admiration and even to affection. These relations were remarkably free of any utilitarian purpose. There was no common vocational interest as in a Do-It-Yourself Club or in a Canary-Bird-Breeders Association. Nor was there a bond of common historical tradition as in national societies or a relation based on the observance of a set of social codes. The same was true in the relation of the group members with each other and in their care for the needy. This type of comradeship was strengthened by such activities as the clearing of woods and the construction of timber shelters for the camps; by the care for the urban meeting places; by communal projects and by song and play. Even in mixed groups of boys and girls the comradeship of all transcended the relation of two individuals. It was cultivation of close human relationships in their purest possible form.

The Youth Movement was distinguished by a strong tendency toward the pure and the simple. This was shown not only from its closeness to nature but also in the artistic activities which played an important role in the life of these groups. Among the lasting achievements of the "Wandervögel" was the collection of German folksongs in a book called the *Zupfgeigenhansl*. (These were cheap books with excellent reproductions of the masterworks of art. Their name was derived from the dark blue paper covers which were regarded as a trademark.) At the same time the Youth Movement revived the staging of the plays of peasants and of lumberjacks, of the repertoire of Hans Sachs, and of the German folk dances. The meeting places in the cities were decorated by the prints, drawings, and ornamental woodcarvings done by the mem-

bers of the groups. Christmas plays were performed at the settlement houses for poor children to bring some artistic enjoyment, in addition to the candy and toys, to these underprivileged. Supplementing these artistic productions, there was an attempt to promote the appreciation of genuine, outstanding art forms among wider strata of the people. In this connection, the printing at popular prices of adequate reproductions of masterworks of the arts was encouraged, as in the "Blue Books."

A good part of the general tendencies of the Youth Movement was the voicing of a protest against existing social norms. What was remarkable and rather unique in the Movement was its success in not exhausting itself in negation but in finding affirmative forms of expression in its development. It turned toward nature, trying to know and to enjoy its beauty. In doing so, it abrogated the squalor of urban life and its accompanying manifestations, from nicotine and alcohol to the more subtle and devious patterns of satisfaction. By communicating with nature and thus finding expression for religious feelings, this Movement abandoned the necessity of an institutionalized religion, and with a pantheistic attitude annulled the claims of the clergy as the only authorized representation of divinity. It abrogated the immorality of a purely opportunistic marriage and regarded love—platonic, erotic, or sexual—to be without sin as long as it was an expression of highest responsibility, a sacred form of giving of oneself and a seeking for human relatedness which carried the ego beyond its narrow confines toward a higher harmony of human existence.

At first glance there seems little in the Youth Movement and in its affirmative simplicity that would betray a relation to the major ideologies of its cultural background. And yet, on a small scale and at least with little ideological superstructure, this Movement achieved what the great ones failed to attain or attained with infinite cost in human lives and values. It is curious in this context that Nietzsche and Rilke strove unsuccessfully to the ends of their lives "to adjust, to revolutionize thought and feeling in accordance with reality" and "to overcome the great spiritual depression, caused by the death of God,"³ while the Youth Movement succeeded in full measure in giving meaning to the lives of its members. In returning in its artistic ambitions to the old German tradition, it found a bridge to Wagner's *Meistersinger*. The ideal of humanistic responsibility revealed a relation to Nietzsche's hopes

for the ascendance to the ethics of the superman, and the acute social conscience was a strong motivation in the activities of the Youth Movement as well as a spark for the shaping of Marxian ideology. And in their closeness to nature, the youth groups held positions similar to those of German romantics like Eichendorff, and their mystic qualities parallel to some extent Herman Hesse's writings of the twentieth century.

The ideologies of the giants of the past century seem like mountain torrents which bring long-needed moisture to the parched earth but at the same time flood the fields and homes with their unrestrained flow and carry with untamed force the top soil into the oceans. In the quiet reservoir of the Youth Movement, the grandeur of these tossing waters may have been lost, but in it the life-giving water could be led into well-controlled channels and thus nourish the roots of the sprouting grain without erosion of the supporting soil or destruction of the human establishment.

In the midst of these fertile lands of the Youth Movement, a monument should be set for a young poet, Nini Krekich, who gave the movement its literary expression in a volume of poems called *Wreath and Sword*. This book was his message and his testament before he fell in the first World War. The meaning was a wreath of flowers, the circle of growth and harvest and the joy and sorrow of becoming and perishing, as well as the circle of all embracing devotion. The Sword was a weapon to be used against evil, against the destructive forces of the world, a symbol for the strength of the "Good," which found its dramatic and heroic personification in the great militant saints from St. George to Joan D'Arc. It was the sword which was hardened to wage peace and to win, by its defense, true glory. The main achievements of the Youth Movement consisted in a very effective demonstration of human relations as an implementation of ethical principles. This was of particular importance at a time when the youth defied attempts at ethical instruction by parents, school, or church. In practice, the Youth Movement became an antidote to delinquency and to excessive selfish materialism.

The methods used in accomplishing these achievements may well deserve close scrutiny by historians and sociologists since they contributed toward maintaining, at least temporarily, the moral fibre in parts of the central European society.

Actually for one brief moment in world history the ideals of

the Youth Movement seemed to be vindicated by history when the prime ministers of Germany and France, Stresemann and Briand, made common cause toward a unification of the torn European nations and when social injustice seemed to recede, at least from the Western world. Yet the tragic end of the Youth Movement was unavoidable, as was the turn of history itself toward disaster. The forms of the Youth Movement were adopted by political organizations who used their attractiveness for the pursuit of ulterior aims. With the development of grave political schisms, the integrity of the Youth Movement was torn asunder and buried by the clouds of turmoil and war.

None of us who were in the Movement during this last phase of its existence will forget the first encounters with the political emissaries, with the organized pied pipers who came to capture the gullible young. The methods of these men ranged from outright blackmail to subtle persuasion, from emotional suggestions to strictly rational arguments. I can vividly remember when we rushed at the end of a school day from our cold classrooms into the sunny spring air, shedding our jackets and turning our thoughts toward the out-of-doors. At the gate there stood two young men distributing handbills. One of them—he now wore a party button—I recognized as a former member of one of our groups. He gave me one of the bills, “just to read it in leisure,” as he said. The leaflet carried the heading, “Du Junge mit dem offenen Blick,” which freely translated “You youth with the clear head,” creates the picture of a bright, alert, straightforward and outgoing youngster, one of the select few smart enough to understand the invitation and brave enough to act on it. Did any one of us want to admit that he could not see the emperor’s new clothes?

The contents of the bill told in a few concise paragraphs about the ideology of a party program. It gave reasons why it was this ideology which would save the country, Europe, and the world and why the party depended on us, “the most promising young men and women,” to help in creating this ideal world. What we had before us in these leaflets was a simple explicit outline of our purpose in life. It promised to give us important functions and the illusion of inexpensability. The arguments seemed so easily understandable and emotionally satisfying to those of us who were craving to be taken seriously and to be given recognition, that

many followed this call, swelling the ranks of the political parties both on the left and right. With the onset of economic depression and the rise of Hitler, support of a party platform seemed to become a necessity for survival, and the Youth Movement in its original form was reduced to insignificance. After World War II the youth of central Europe withdrew from the public scene, attempting merely to achieve a life of safety and security for the individual. The main aim is avoidance of war and violence, and ideas going beyond job and home are now regarded with suspicion.

With the end of the Youth Movement a drama was enacted on a microcosmic scale that has presented itself again and again on a world-wide stage even to the present day. The promises of a simple solution for the complexities of human life, of a secure place in a logically determined order of society have remained the slogans of the totalitarians attracting right now the insecure new nations of the world who are striving for the ideological justification for their existence.

In contrast, the mature democracies, the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland, perhaps England and the U.S.A. have so far maintained their existence without this narrowly defined ideological basis and are facing with more subtle courage the necessary flexibility and conceptual difficulties of the manifold relations of the individual to the whole of society. This is a valiant attempt to supplant the exclusiveness of the totalitarians with a more inclusive society.

A study of the central European Youth Movement should yield records of strength and weakness in a transient model system which could help in our competition with the totalitarians for the leadership in the youth movements of the new nations. However, beyond that, the pertinence of the Youth Movement lies in its deeper contents, which are expressed in its message that the pursuit of the "Good" can be exciting and that regard for high values can enrich the experience of our life. The American "generations" have failed to substantiate this message and this failure is regarded as one of the serious threats to the existence of our society.⁴

FOOTNOTES

⁴The records show that by 1906 there were 1,300 members and in 1913 about 21,000 members of the Wandervögel. In this year 14,500 day trips were carried out with 156,000 participants, and 1,970 trips longer than one

day with 15,000 participants. The monthly periodical of the group reached about 30,000 subscribers. At the peak of the movements in the 1920's estimates of the total membership in the Youth Movement vary from 50,000 to 200,000. The wide range is due to the uncertainties in defining the sections of the Boy Scouts and of other youth groups which can be included among the characteristic youth groups related to the Wandervögel.

²Erich Heller, *The Disinherited Mind; Essays in German Literature and Thought: Goethe, Burckhardt, Nietzsche, Rilke, Spengler, Kafka, Kraus* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957).

³*Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁴See the analysis by Walter Lippman in *The Public Philosophy*.

ON A 13,000 FOOT PEAK

By E. H. TEMPLIN

A thumb-high willow a too tall plant,
Too many peaks with spilled snow-paint.

Even the sun has a wind-cracked lip,
Looking across at sharp side up,

Grandeur and hobby-horse peaks in one,
So near that feather-dusters can

Whisk all of them, and sticks with nails
Spear blue foil lakes. The willow reels

And rubs a funny-bone of light
Under that awesome sky to let.

Poems by Pasternak

TRANSLATED BY EUGENE M. KAYDEN

SPRING RAINSTORM

The rain smiled at a wildcherry, drenched
The lacquer of cabs, the tremor of trees.
In moonlight, pop-eyed, the fiddlers filed
To the theatre.—Citizens, close your ranks!

Winds, pools of rain. As a throat choked
With tears, the innermost heart of roses
With jewels aflame! Rain, spout new joy
On roses, brows, eyelashes, clouds!

The moon silvers fluttering dresses,
Linked arms, the triumph of ravished lips,
And shapes in plaster their epic, shapes
A bust no hand has ever shaped.

Whose blood, in passion, suddenly flooded
The heart to the brim with hope and glory?
Behold, a leader's hand has gripped
Their lips and aortas tight as a ball.

Not rain nor night nor multitudes striving
Together, shouting hurrahs to Kerensky,
But a blinding escape from catacombs
And last despairs to the open, the light.

No roses, lips, or the roar of throats,
No rage of crowds in blind commotion,
But the swelling tides of Europe's unrest
In a storm exultant on our asphalt squares.

(Revolution 1917)

ENGLISH LESSONS

When Desdemona came a-singing,
And a little time to live had she,—
Not love, her fatal star, she sobbed:
It was a willow, willow tree.

When Desdemona came a-singing,
With firmer voice and lifted head,
Her demon at her death prepared
A psalm of a weeping river bed.

And when Ophelia came a-singing,
And a little time to live had she,—
Like storms that sweep a hayloft clean
Her soul was swept with misery.

And when Ophelia came a-singing,
With wild and bitter dreams to pine,
What trophies in her grave had she?
An armful of willow and celandine.

Their passions fell away like rags,
And silent into the pool of night
And time they went, with aching hearts,
Their loving forms transfused in light.

THE WEeping GARDEN

The garden is frightful! It drips and listens:
Is it in loneliness here,
Squeezing a branch as torn lace at the window,
Or is there a witness near?

The earth is heavy with swollen burdens;
Smothered, the spongy weald.
Listen! far away, as though it were August,
Ripens the night in the field.

No sound. No stranger around to spy
In the night. In the garden alone,
Rain starts up again with dripping and tumbling
On roof, gutter, flagstone.

I'll bring the rain to my lips, and listen
If I'm still in loneliness here,
Although I am bursting with sobs in the darkness,
Or if there is a witness near.
Deep silence. Not even a leaf is astir.
No gleam of light to be seen.
Only my choking gulps, the squelching of slippers,
And my sighs and tears between.

SUMMER OF 1917

Athirst, we longed in discontent
For moths and butterflies;
Around us the woven memories
Of summer, mint, and honey.
No chime of clocks but ringing flails
From dawn to evening dusk,
Stinging the air with panting dreams
Enraptured by the weather.
Sometimes the gladsome sunset, idling,
Surrendered to cicadas
And stars and trees its governance
Of kitchens and of gardens.
The moon spread long uneven beams
Or hid itself in dark;
And softly, softly flowed the night
From cloud to passing cloud.
Not like a shower, but in a dream,
In shy forgetfulness,
The rain was shuffling at the door,
With the smell of wine-corks in the air.
The smell in dust, the smell in grass.
And if one cared to learn,
The smell of gentry copybooks
Was all of rights and brotherhood.
The councils met in villages;
You, at their meetings, too?
The days hung bright like sorrel-trees,
With the smell of wine-corks in the air.

POETRY

Poetry, I swear an oath to you, and shall
Not stop until I'm hoarse with pain!
You're not a stiff-shirt, prim sweet singer;
You—are summer townfolk come third-class;
You—are suburbs, not a mere refrain.

You're hot like May, Yamskáya street,
And tough like Shevárdin fort by night,
Where clouds pass always groaning,
Or scamper quickly out of sight.

By curving rails divided, you are
No stale old tune, but suburbs dear
To me where men crawl home from stations,
Not gay with song but still with fear.

The sprouts of rain, in grapevines mired,
In the long, long night till dawn will pine,
And scrawl from dripping roofs acrostics,
With bubbles in the rhyming line.

When simple truisms, O Poetry,
Are held like buckets at the tap,
The hoarded store will surely spout,—
For me in my copy-books to trap.

IMPROVISATION

I fed out of my hand a flock of keys
To clapping of wings and shrill cries in flight.
Sleeves up, arms out, on tiptoe I rose;
At my elbow I felt the nudging of night.

And the dark. And a pond, and the wash of waves.
And screeching black beaks in their savage attack;
The birds of a specie I-love-you were quick
For the kill, than to die, to hunger, fall back.

And a pond. And the dark. The pulsating flare
From pipkins of pitch in gloom of midnight.
The boat's keel nibbled by lapping of waves.
The birds at my elbow in their wrathful fight.

Night gurgled, washed in the gullets of weirs.
Always, if the young were unfed, by rote,
The hen-birds would kill,—before the roulades
Would die in the shrilling, the crooked throat.

LOVE IS A HEAVY CROSS

Love is for some a heavy cross,
But you are lovely and outspoken,
And as good as the key to life,
The secret of your charm unbroken.

Dreams come with rustling in the spring,
With truths and tidings gaily running.
From suchlike fountain-head your race;
Like air, your mind is free from cunning.

To waken, easeful, gain new sight,
Shake off the scum of idle chatter,
And live unspotted all the years
To come,—should be no puzzling matter.

SPRING

I've come from the street, O Spring! There poplars stand
Amazed, horizons tremble, houses fear they may fall!
There the air is blue like the bundle of linen
A patient takes home on leaving the hospital.

There the evening's blank, like a story begun
By a star, but broken off without a conclusion,
While a thousand riotous eyes stare empty of mind
And thought in immeasurable deep confusion.

Thanksgiving

WILLIAM E. PETTIT

While his wife was washing and dressing the baby in her bedroom, Tom in the living room-bedroom was dressing himself for the long family afternoon ahead. His sister's house this time—she was going to “do” the turkey; the aunts would be there too, and his mother and Homer, and a long long day would be had by all. He sighed, rubbed the top of his head which, so far today, was not tense, and put on his shoes, admiring them and their deep shine. He remembered the clerk at The English Shop, a big bony Scotsman, when Tom said he wanted loafers.

“Don’t talk that way, man”—it was almost “mon”—“loafers won’t do, you know. Not to teach up there.” He jerked his chin north, toward the be-treed and be-ivied brick buildings of the college.

“Well, hell,” Tom said, “there’s got to be a line somewhere. It’s bad enough that I have to dress like ten thousand on a four thousand salary. But I won’t *look* like that too. And I’m going to be comfortable.”

“Four thousand. Is that what they pay you? Say, lad, I make that much. And I never finished grammar school.”

“That’s life, isn’t it?” Tom said. He shook his head at the pointed oxfords the clerk held out, and at the thick-soled reddish cordovans. “I want comfort and I want to look neutral. Know what I mean? Not college, not Madison Avenue, not any damned thing labelled.”

“Sure. I dig you, man.”

They settled on the low moccasin-toed shoes—Tom had forgotten what they were called—and a plain grey suit, and a heavy brown Harris tweed jacket. It was the only expensive jacket Tom had ever owned, and he was very fond of it, fond in spite of his usual lack of interest in clothes. The pants that matched the jacket were plain brown flannel, perfectly innocent as far as Tom could see, except for the little belt across the back that would be covered

by his coat. The clerk tried to sell him button-down shirts, explaining, "Tweedy things don't go with a pointed collar, old chap. People who know anything about clothes notice little things like that, you know."

Tom had laughed. "Well, I don't even know the 'little things,' much less notice them."

"I didn't either until I got into this business. But I've got a quick eye. It's simple, really; you pick it up in a month or so. Matter mostly of keeping abreast with the changes."

"I'll rely on you for that," Tom said. "But no button-down collars."

He finished tying the roughish brown tie, also the clerk's choice, and thought, looking at his façade, his ensemble, in the mirror, that it wasn't bad. Vee, his wife, who "had taste," approved of the clerk's and Tom's compromises too.

She and the baby were ready, the baby very self-conscious in her new dress and petticoat, and knee socks, and Tom said, "Say, look at that. Aren't you pretty? And so grown-up, too."

"Yes, I am," she said, and they all laughed and went down in the elevator to the car. His sister lived on Long Island, so they drove across the Triboro and out past La Guardia Field. The traffic was heavy—the weather for Thanksgiving being very warm—and after an hour in the car the baby began to get tired and cranky. Tom felt the tension in his scalp, the result of his reading too late last night to make up for this day's waste of time.

He said to Vee, "What's their street?"

"I don't know. Isn't it seventy-something?"

"For Christ's sake. That's a big help." He was sorry as soon as he said it; Vee dreaded more than he did these bi- or tri-monthly meetings with his family: his jack-hammer step-father, his old-maid aunts, his unreconstructed Southern brother-in-law Burt. He said, more quietly, "What time did you say we'd be there?"

"About four. She wanted us to come at two, but I said the baby was asleep then. She said she'd plan dinner for five."

Tom looked at his watch; it was ten after four and they were almost there. He dug out his wallet and handed it to Vee, and she looked at his address list. "Seventy-third Road," she said, handing back the wallet.

"Thanks. Hell of a lot of difference it makes, anyway; the houses are all alike."

"But dear, we must be sure. We want *your* family, not any old family."

"Drop dead," he said. "There's a few nuts still hanging on your family oak too, you know."

"Yes, dear."

The baby said, "I don't *want* to go to Kay's house. I want to go home." She began to whine.

"Here we are," he said, pulling up before a garden-type apartment. He patted the baby's knee. "Hop out, snook."

"Wipe the tears away," she said to her mother.

"There aren't any tears," Vee said. "Come on, hop out."

They went up the two flights of stairs. The apartment door was ajar. Vee pushed the round flat white button and they heard the harsh, flat buzzer inside. Then Vee pushed the door and they saw Kay coming towards them, plump and chic and looking stern.

"Well," Kay said. "Finally. Turkey's burned up, but here you are." Her voice too was flat and hard. Tom looked at his watch, a shock of guilt struggling with a shock of anger in his stomach. It was only twenty after four; he pushed the feelings down.

"Hi, Kay," he said.

"Hi." She turned away and walked back into the living room. They followed her, the baby close to Tom, holding his hand, as if she were very unsure about what she would find around the corner. The aunts were there, the fat one and the thin one, both in black. Homer was there, wearing gleaming black shoes, blue wool socks, light grey flannel pants, a darker grey jacket sketched with large checks of blue, and a blue and yellow bow tie. His mother was there, wearing something white with big black flowers splashed all over it. Burt, Kay's husband, was standing behind Homer's chair, wearing loafers and tan slacks and a red flannel shirt without a tie. Tom raised his hand to shake Burt's hand, but Burt, looking down, said, "Hey, look at the peg pants," and laughed.

Tom didn't understand; his pants were the same width all the way down. "Peg?" he said.

"Yeah. Hey, Kay, look at the peg pants. For Christ's sake."

Kay, behind Tom, said, "Well, look at that. Madison Avenue. I never thought you'd come to that. Is that what you have to wear to teach college?"

Tom felt the familiar aggressive edge in her voice, the rough

and vicious glee in Burt's. Trying to keep his smile from sliding off his face, he remembered the last time they'd met, when his head had been very tense and, against the knowledge that he ought not, he'd let himself get into a long senseless argument with Burt, about politics and the niggers and all the Puerto Ricans being supported by City Welfare, and tired and uncomfortable he had cut coldly at Burt's prejudices and false facts, without of course making the slightest change except to reinforce Burt's deep antagonisms to Tom's liberal northern views. He was getting it back now, he thought, and at the same time he remembered being aware that the pants, although not peg, were cut thinner than his old ones, so that he had trouble putting them on over his shoes. He had noticed it but had not seen its significance in terms of fashion because, as he'd told the big bony Scotsman in The English Shop, he didn't know anything about those things.

Kay lifted up the tail of his coat. "And the little belt in the back. Isn't that cute?"

"No kiddin'?" Burt said. "Whoo-ee. Let me see." He walked around Tom and held up the coat tail too and pointed at the little belt and laughed again. All the others were sitting around the room watching Tom, smiling and laughing, and the baby, holding his hand, looked up, her face uneasy. He thought that they hadn't gotten in yet, really, hadn't taken off any coats or anything; he could pick up the baby, say to Vee, "Come on," and walk out the door. It would, in a way, be childish, but it would be final and complete, and after all, wasn't it more childish to maintain a familial relationship you had outgrown, that at best could be boredom and at worst pain? But he knew it would upset his mother, if no one else, and it was after all a small thing, so he walked with the baby to one of the aunts and made her and himself kiss the aunt Hello, and so around the room, and then he sat down, the baby standing between his knees, looking around shyly at all the large strange and ugly faces grinning at her. Vee was still doing the rounds, getting the wet cigar-ish smack on the cheek from Homer that Tom knew she loved so well, and he smiled again, more easily now.

Kay said, "Let me have your coat, Tom."

"In a minute," he said, smiling and sort of patting the baby, who was still staring around the room, her hand on his arm clenching the sleeve tightly. Kay stared at him, her hand held out for his

coat. His aunt, the thin one who worked, spelled out, "S-H-Y. L-E-T it A-L-O-N-E."

The fat one, who stayed home, said, "Yes, shy. Let it alone."

"Look at her," her grandmother said. "Look at the pretty dress."

The baby looked at her grandmother, whom she had seen most often of these strangers, and who after all had no large nose, large teeth, big moles with hairs sticking out of them. She stuck out her foot and said, "And new shoes, too."

Tom let go of her then and stood up, taking off his coat and handing it to Kay, who carried it into the bedroom. The baby walked quickly to her mother, across the room, and stood pressed against her knee, but in a few minutes she unpacked her straw suitcase and began showing Homer her little rubber dolls and mice.

Kay came back from the bedroom and said, "How about a drink, you two?"

"Scotch, if you have it," Tom said. "And water."

"Vee?"

"Scotch and water too, please. A very small one."

"Well," Kay said. "Since when?"

"Yeah," Burt said. "Your husband's teaching you too, is he? Really cracking down on you."

Tom looked at Vee; she just smiled, and he saw she was in a good balance between ease and guardedness. He remembered that the half dozen times they'd been together in these few years, both he and Vee had had Scotch and water, and Vee always a small one which she never finished. But Kay, with her marvelous control of memory, chose now to forget, and did. Burt probably didn't remember. But Kay, he knew, always took in all small details like that and then, with perfect ease, selected the memories she wished and pushed the others aside. She said, "What's yours again, Tom?"

"Scotch," he said slowly. "And water. And a small one for Vee."

Burt and Kay went into the kitchen and Tom talked with his aunts and with Homer, and Vee and the baby talked with his mother. In a few minutes Kay came back with two large glasses on a tray. She handed one to Vee, who smiled and took it, sipped it and set it down and didn't touch it again. He took the other glass and tasted it cautiously, almost surprised that it was Scotch. And water. But it was very strong, much too strong for Vee, and

he drank half the glass, thinking how regal, how very haughty, and how socially irresponsible it was, to use your mind as Kay did hers, so like putty, with such great abandon of fact and of truth, everyday uncomplicated truth. He drank again, deeply, almost finishing the large glass of strong Scotch, and while Kay and Burt rattled the turkey around the kitchen and he chatted with half a mind with his aunts, without his willing it the events almost four years past, from just below the surface of his everyday mind, unfolded themselves as if against a screen inside his mind.

He had just been married to Vee a few months, and was still working on that technical magazine, when his mother called him one day, crying, and said, "Tom, Kay's in Florida. She's in jail."

"What?"

"Yes. George is in jail too; he's in California. Oh Tom, he's a thief; he steals cars."

The flood of confirmation came, not before but at the same time as the flood of concern. George, the skinny, tall, dark bastard, with the loud clothes and peg pants and the big cream-colored Buick, whom Kay had met in a Village bar, of whom Tom had said on sight, "He's a slimy son of a bitch. I'll bet he's a crook."

His mother had said, "Oh, Tom, why do you say things like that? He's very nice; he's so polite and pleasant."

"Not like me, hey? Well, pleasant, smeasant, I still say he's a crook."

"You just don't like Kay's friends, and you know it."

"You're damned right I don't. One after another, some ignorant jerk or some damned fool moron. What's this one? Another dancing teacher?"

"No. He sells soap to super-markets. On Long Island. He has a distributorship. He makes lots of money."

"I'll bet."

Then Kay and George had an apartment in the Village, not far from his own. They didn't see each other often; George didn't like him either. He met Vee and was busy with her, and after they were married, they moved to Jersey. It had been months since he'd seen Kay, who was living in the Bronx with George and a four-sectioned foam-rubber couch, he'd heard, and now his mother was telling him she was in jail. In Florida.

"She called me, but Tom, she was so nasty to me."

"She wants help," he said.

"No. She told me she never wanted to see me again. She said I was a rotten mother."

"Then why did she call?"

"She said she just wanted to let me know; she said she knew I'd be happy to find out she was in jail. And she hung up."

"Where is she?"

"Tampa."

He didn't say anything for a minute, listening to his mother cry, and then he said, "I'll go down."

"Oh Tom, how can you; you have no money and your job— And I can't ask Homer—"

"The hell you can't. She needs help. I'll borrow some on my pay. How much can you get? Right away?"

"We have a hundred and fifty in the bank here, that we never touch. For emergency, in case—"

"Well, this is one now. Get it out. Bring it down to the bus terminal. Call me when you get there."

"All right." She hung up, and he knew she was already going for her coat, her hat, her bankbook. When there was something to do, something that had to be done, she did it; there was no amount of blood or sickness or social shame that could floor her, he knew; it was only ideas that she couldn't handle. If she didn't have brains, he thought, she did have guts, and that he felt was always at least half a person.

He finished his cigarette, thinking, and then he got up and went to his boss. To make his case strong, he told the boss the whole truth. The boss wrote out an expense slip for immediate cash and gave it to him, saying, "Fill out whatever amount you need. We'll work that out later. And take as much time as you have to."

Tom nodded, his eyes getting a little wet. "Thanks, Mac. You're a helluva guy. For a boss. And a Republican."

"Go on, get out. Call the airport and get a flight."

Tom decided not to call Vee, who was teaching school. He drew his money, went down in the elevator to a travel agency in the building and bought a round trip ticket to Tampa and got a seat reserved for seven that night. Then he went back to his desk and put his work in shape for the week's book. His mother called and he went down in the elevator again and went to the bus terminal. She gave him the money and she cried again, angrily now.

"She's so damned smart," she said. "She'll never listen to anyone, she knows it all. She won't take advice."

Tom said, "You thought he was a nice guy, remember?"

"Yes, but I changed my mind after they were married. He was so unreasonable, he wouldn't let Kay do anything, he wouldn't let her have any money for the house. And he went away so often and told her to stay home, not to see her friends, not to come to see me. She called me on the phone, every day, but she wouldn't come up; she said he told her not to. I told her he had no right to do that, I told her she ought to walk out on him, to bring him to his senses."

She stopped and wiped her eyes and blew her nose. Tom said, "Why didn't you call me?"

"Oh, Tom, you always fought so, you two. And I knew you hated George. I thought it would work itself out."

"Well, it has, all right."

They walked to a bench and sat down, and Tom put all the money in his wallet and squeezed it flat and put it in his pocket and buttoned it carefully, feeling how the thickness rested against his buttock so he would be aware if it fell out or was taken away. His mother said, "I didn't know he was a crook; how could I know that? How did you know, you said that right away, that he was a crook. How did you know?"

"Oh, I didn't *know*, Mom. But that car, and he didn't work regular hours, he was home all times of day. Most of all, he wasn't bright enough to earn that much money."

"But I thought he was a salesman. They make a lot of money, I know."

Tom shook his head, wondering how anyone could live as long as she had, a life not sheltered but full of sickness and need and debts and hungers, and still know so little of her world, have such vague and rosy values. He said, "Not salesmen like George. He wasn't smooth and full of energy. He couldn't even be sociable."

"Oh, if she'd only listened. I told her—"

"Sure, you told her lots of things. Too many things. You told her not to wear lipstick, not to kiss the boys, not to stay out after nine-thirty. You told her and told her and told her, and never made any of it stick. So when it's important, after years of not listening, why should she suddenly hear you?" Then he put his hand over hers. "Now, forget all that. I'll go down and do what

I can, and if I get her home, you just forget everything. All right? No I-told-you-so, no more advice or criticism? Promise?"

"All right. I won't even go near her."

"No, Ma." He shook his head, tired of the whole damned bunch of them, wishing he was a goddamned orphan without a relative in the whole world. "That's not what she needs. She needs a place to come home to where no one will lecture her. If she's learned her lesson, fine; if she hasn't, your advice won't help her; it will only get her back up and she'll run out to find somebody else to tell her she's sweet and pretty and the world doesn't appreciate her. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I guess so. All right, whatever you say. I've messed it up so far. I'll do what you say."

"Well," he said, putting his hand on hers again. "It's not your fault. These things happen."

"Yes," she said. "I'm just not bright enough."

It was that that held him still in touch with her; if only she'd been completely like Homer, he could have been free of her, of them all, years ago. "No," he said. "But you're bright enough to know you're not bright enough. Which is more than most people are. Now go home and forget it as much as you can. I'll call you as soon as I find out anything."

They got up and she pulled his head down and kissed him. "God bless you, son. You're a good son."

"After all?" he laughed, remembering the arguments, the times she'd called him a lousy Communist, a dirty atheist, the times he'd called her a bigoted Mick, a thick bog-trotter. And the months, sometimes the years, when they'd had no contact at all. He said, "Okay, Ma. I have my moments. I'll see what I can do."

He didn't go back to the office. He took a bus home and packed his suitcase. When Vee came home, he told her about it. She was very upset. She said, "I've never known anyone in jail before. Poor Kay. What will they do to her?"

"Oh, not much, probably. First offender, she'll get paroled, I imagine. If she tells them everything. That's why I have to go down there. She's sticking to George, I can tell by the way she talked to my mother over the phone; she thinks we're all against her. If she doesn't tell what she knows, they'll have to sentence her. And she can seem awfully hard when she wants to."

"Do you think you can convince her? She doesn't like you, does she?"

"Right now she hates me. Because I was right about George. But she's hated me before. She'll come around. She's pliable. Too goddamned pliable, that's her trouble."

She drove with him to the airport, across New York. She said, "I can't drive in New York, I've never driven there. I'll get lost."

"Nonsense. Get in the car. I'll miss the plane if I wait for a bus." He drove and Vee sat beside him, her hands twisted together in her lap, looking numbly at the streets and the signs he told her to watch. He said, "Relax, honey. If I can fly to Florida on borrowed money to get my dear sister out of the clink, you can drive fifteen miles across New York."

"All right," she said. She was frightened, but she did it; it was within the limit of those things she would do if he insisted. Outside that limit he never asked her; at least he never asked her twice. That was Kay's trouble, he thought; she had none of those limits; her infinity was that if she was loved by anyone at all, she would do and believe and love as the loved one told her. She was the pure feminine receptacle, the negative essence, the infinite potential upon whom anyone might place his stamp and seal. The obedient and loving Griselda. That, Tom thought, is the end of a girl's education and purpose: marry, marry, marry, but never a word of who or what or why. Vee, within the rigid barriers of her being, was just as subject to influence as Kay. If he, with George, became a car thief, she would accept it, let herself be persuaded that society was rotten anyway and that there were worse crooks operating under the guise of legality and that the world owed him a chance anyway, and so on and so on. The difference was, Tom thought, that Vee would never help him, never drive his stolen cars. Vee's husband might land in jail, Vee never would. Kay, obviously, was different. And his own father, he remembered, had dictated all his opinions which his mother had copied down verbatim.

He enjoyed the flight to Florida until they came down into the heavy wet air above Tampa. Then he felt that all the fat he had accumulated these last ten years was being reduced to liquid and was running greasily down his skin. He found a lawyer who seemed to know the whole structure of young crime and the legal labyrinths through which it must pass, Florida being like the trap

below the drainage bowl, a settling point for much of the sediment and scum of the North. The lawyer also knew the DA, the judge, the U. S. Marshal, the FBI man who'd arrested Kay, and he thought he could get her off all right if she would tell them everything she knew about the gang George worked with, since it was obvious from the way he'd been caught that George was much too stupid to be more than a small wheel in a national industry. The lawyer said he would handle it for two hundred plus expenses, and Tom, not knowing if he was being taken or not and not knowing any way to find out, paid him. The lawyer took Tom to an office next to the jail and flushed out a fat little brown man who arranged the bail, and then Tom and the lawyer went to the jail. Tom was wrinkled and sagged and soggy from the heat and the top of his head was so tight he felt his ears were being pulled back against his skull.

The sheriff put him in a little room with a fan and closed the door. After a while another door opened and she came in. He felt, for the first time since his mother had called him, a sickness in his stomach. The last time he'd seen Kay, in New York, she had been plump, round, and buxom, and pale with New York mid-winter pallor. Now she was dark, almost chocolate-colored from the sun, and from her sunken cheeks to her calfless legs there wasn't a curve, a padding of flesh anywhere. Her bright stylish expensive dress hung in straight pleats from the racks that were her shoulders down over the bones that were her legs. She looked like someone just rescued from the oven of a concentration camp, before the heat had done more than brown the skin. Even her hair, usually blondish and wavy, was dark and hung in straight order around her skull. He was so shocked by the complete change in her that he said, without being able not to, "My God, Kay. You're so thin."

She said, "Well, if that's what you came here for, goodbye." She turned away and started to open the door, to go back to her cell, and he saw that she was indeed his sister, the same prickly, petulant Kay. He said, "I didn't come here for that kind of crap, that's for sure. Come here. Tell me what happened. Tell me the whole thing."

"Why should I?" she said, still holding the door knob, the door partly open. "You're nothing to me. I'm sticking with my husband. He'll get me out of here."

Tom laughed. "Sure, sure he will. Just as soon as he gets out

himself. He's in jail too, you know. In San Diego. Next move, Alcatraz. For about seven years."

She opened the door wider. "You're lying. They told you to say that, didn't they? They told me the same lie."

"They, they? Who's they? I haven't talked to anyone down here. Ma told me, she said you told her over the phone."

She laughed. "I told her. That's funny. I expected you to lie better than that. I told her."

Tom was confused, and he knew he had to make an effect on her quickly or she'd walk back to her cell and refuse to talk to him again. He said, "She must have talked to someone else too, but she forgot to tell me. She was so upset I couldn't make much sense out of what she said."

"Yeah, I'll bet. I can see *her* upset."

This was new to him too, this hatred for her mother, a new *x* in the mystery. He knew Kay and his mother scrapped and scrambled, especially in the years before his mother married Homer, in the years Tom had been away in the service. But he always felt underneath this feminine irritability, that they were very close. He knew they were together a lot, that their minds operated on about the same level. He didn't know quite how to handle this, so he said, "Well, she was, but that's not the point now. The point is that George is in jail in California and he told the FBI the whole story, which is why you're in jail here, so I don't see why—"

She slammed the door and came towards him, all at once, and he was afraid for a moment she was going to claw at his face with those long curved red nails protruding beyond her crooked skeletal fingers. She said, "He didn't. You're lying, you're a son of a bitch. He wouldn't tell them, he'd never tell them."

He shrugged. "How'd they catch you, then?"

It was a guess, but it was the right one, and for the few months she'd been in the business, against George's wide experience, not too difficult a guess to make. And it did the trick too. She fought him, she was brutal and cold and scornful, and she was shrill and insulting and obscene, but she listened. He came back the next day, and the next, and in between he got more information from the FBI and the lawyer, and on the third day she agreed to come out on bail. A week later, she was sentenced and the sentence suspended, and she was ordered to return home and to make weekly reports to the parole board. Two days later Tom gave her what

money he had left and came home, leaving her there to appear as a witness against another member of the Handy Little National Car Transportation Company that George had been a member of. She told Tom about George's first wife and the "pending divorce," and she realized that she was not even legally married to him, despite the Virginia ceremony they'd performed on their first junket south in the big Buick. She rode to the airport with him, and she said, "Thanks, Tom. I've really been a fool, but I see it now. I wanted to believe him, and I made myself, but believe me I see now he's just a cheap little crook and he was using me, and I'm finished. If he lay there on fire in front of me, I wouldn't spit on him."

She was all right now, he knew; the melodrama maker was working again. He said, "Oh, I would; I'd spit on him."

But she didn't even laugh. "I wouldn't. I really wouldn't. I could stomach anything but his turning me in. *That* I'll never forgive."

Tom, who was not at all sure George had turned her in, since he had only the FBI's word for it, didn't say anything, thinking that if anyone had to be tossed to the wolves he could think of no one better to toss than George. He kissed her fraternally and got in the plane and came home, several hundred dollars wiser and poorer.

Kay came home a few days later, on the cheapest bus she could get, and didn't stay overnight at any of the Coral Groves or Blue Grottoes she and George had patronized. She got a little room near her mother, got a job, and made her weekly visits to her parole officer. On Tom's advice, she began seeing a psychiatrist. Vee asked her to dinner several times and she came, but she was always very quiet and drawn into herself, and when Tom tried to joke about Florida and George, she just shook her head and her eyes filled. So he and Vee decided it was better to leave her alone, that he was too much of a reminder of the unpleasant past she was not yet strong enough to look at squarely and learn from. He kept in touch with her, mostly through his mother, and in a few months he heard that she had moved downtown, to be nearer her work and away from the old neighborhood where everybody knew what had happened. And she stopped going to the psychiatrist.

"He's so expensive," his mother said, "she can't afford that. Anyway, I think it's nonsense, the whole business. Lying on a

couch talking, what good does *that* do? And twenty-five dollars an hour. I told her so, I told her it was just a damned racket."

Tom said, wearily, "Okay, Mom, you know best, because you're older. Keep it up, you'll have her back in jail. Maybe you can arrange to get her in the cell next to George."

"Oh, stop it; that's all over. She's learned her lesson. Besides, she can't afford it on her salary. Poor thing, she has two jobs now, trying to pay off the debts *he* left her."

Then, not quite a year after Tom's trip to Florida, Kay married Burt. She married him because he lived in the next room in her rooming house, and because he was as opposite to George as he could be without being intelligent. He was from the South, an engineer, he drove a 1940 Oldsmobile which he periodically rebuilt with his own hands, he owed nobody a cent anywhere, and he supported his widowed mother back home. He knew all about George and he met Kay's parole officer and got everybody's blessing. He and Homer were great beer-buddies and shared a passion for boats. Tom and Burt didn't care for each other, but Tom thought Kay had, by luck and propinquity, at last picked someone who was sane and stable and stubborn enough to rule her, which God knows she needed, Tom felt, because he doubted if she'd ever have sense enough to rule herself.

Tom and Vee were at the wedding, of course, and they tried visiting back and forth for a while, but the only interest Tom and Burt shared was cars, and Vee and Kay felt they were women from different worlds, which they were. So the visits became farther and farther apart, until the last one when Tom had been piqued into a political discussion. Then the visits had stopped, and this was that inevitable family holiday which despite the wishes of almost all parties, must continue as long as there was any bond at all holding them tenuously together by twos and threes.

As far as he could see, George was dead and completely buried, and he was amused sometimes to hear Kay, echoing Burt, speak with contempt of cars or clothes or food or furniture which Kay, echoing George, had once valued most highly. There was at such times, he was sure, no tinge of awareness in her mind that she had reversed herself, almost evaginated herself, in her desire to please. Like a faucet, she was; turn off the hot, turn on the cold, and through the same pipes flowed ice where there was no trace of the steam that preceded it.

His aunt, the one who worked, said to him, "I like your jacket, Tommy. Is it Harris tweed?"

"Yeah. Pretty snazzy for a poor boy, isn't it?"

The other aunt said, "It *looked* like Harris tweed, I was sure it was."

The first aunt said, "Yes. I've always liked jackets like that." His thin aunt worked in a lady's clothing store, a high priced one, and the one thing in the world she knew and loved and could talk about was clothes. She said, "It's very well cut and tailored too."

"How could you tell?" he asked. "I only kept it on a minute, you hardly saw it."

She laughed, very pleased. "I could tell in half that time. I could draw it for you right now, color and pattern and everything. Even the buttons."

The other aunt, the fat one who stayed home, said, "She can tell, believe me. Even the buttons."

Kay and Burt were carrying the turkey and things into the dining room now, crossing the end of the living room each time they went back to the kitchen, and Kay stopped, holding a dish of olives and a vase full of celery, and she said "How about those pants, Aunt Mary? With the little belt in the back. Could you draw those too?"

It was one of those times when he either lost control or deliberately said, "To hell with it," and kicked off the safety brakes. He said, "I saw an old friend of yours the other day, Kay, who had on a pair just like them. Belt and all."

She looked at him and then at Burt, who stopped behind her, holding some glasses on a tray. She winked at Burt, very broadly, and jerked her chin toward Tom, as much as to say, "Listen, now, listen to him squirm." Then she said, "Yes, Tom, tell us. Who was it?"

"George," he said. "George Craft."

She didn't drop the celery, or spill the olives, standing there with everyone's eyes on her and the silence thick and unrippled in the room except for the baby's "Come *on*, Tyke, supper's ready" and Burt's quickly choked off "You son of a ———." She didn't drop anything but she shook so the celery stems rustled together and Tom could hear them across the room, like a cold wind through a wet tree. Then she turned red and then white under her Jones Beach tan, and she turned away from him and carried

the olives and celery into the dining room and they all heard her set them down on the table.

His mother said, "Tom, you shouldn't. You're cruel, cruel."

He stood up. "Okay, Mom, forget it now. That's all." Then he stretched and said in a normally loud tone, "Right on time, five o'clock. Let's eat. Are you all ready, Kay?"

Burt answered. "Yeah, we're ready. Come on."

Tom said, "Okay, here we come. Wake Homer up, Ma. And Vee, you'd better take the baby to the bathroom. Come on, Aunt Mary, I'll lend you my fat elbow."

It was a very good dinner. Kay had learned from her mother just how to "do" a turkey, whatever else she had learned or forgotten, and Tom felt that it was fine, if a woman wasn't good for much else, that she was able to cook. He forgot about his weight and stuffed himself, and he enjoyed himself more that Thanksgiving Day than he had at any family gathering in over ten years. Even with the cute little belt in the back.

HOMAGE TO A HUSSY

By ARNOLD L. LAZARUS

How like the late seductive Samothrace
she traffics with male gland and jerking nerve.
Men need not see the decorous smiling face;
she zips unzoned from curve to grinding curve.
With what demure obscenities she's wooed
the warriors and made the armers moan.
Whoever hugs Miss Missile in the mood
soon learns the leaping lady's not a stone.
Behind the generals the aides line up,
all lusting orderly. She takes command of
citizens who likewise queue and tup,
who keep sweet Liberty in the very land of.
Unkept, articulate, M_rides with haste—
yet seeding space may make the hussy chaste.

Camus' "The Plague"

WILSON O. CLOUGH

Few critical dicta are more firmly entrenched than that which warns fiction to avoid the "heresy of the didactic," the *haec fabula docet* which too obviously adorns the little narrative and too easily satisfies the conventional reader. The purpose of the novel, we know, is to put questions, not to solve them. It is either to be naturalistic, that is, sternly truthful without comment, or to be an art of fiction, sensitive in execution and insight. "The artist," said Chekhov, "should be, not the judge of his characters and their conversations, but only an unbiased witness." Nor, he added, should we confuse "*solving a problem and stating a problem*. It is only the second that is obligatory."¹ Henry James put it differently: "Do not think too much about optimism and pessimism; try and catch the color of life itself."

Albert Camus shares this view of fiction. "Let us not deceive ourselves in esthetics. . . ," he has written.

The *roman à thèse*, the work which proves, the most detestable of all, is one most often inspired by a *satisfied* thought. That truth which one thinks to confine, he demonstrates. But these are ideas set in motion, and ideas are the opposite of thinking. . . . All thought which renounces unity exalts diversity. And diversity is the territory of art. The only thought that frees the spirit is that which leaves it alone. . . . No doctrine solicits it. It waits on the ripening of the work and of life."²

No novel can, nevertheless, escape being a comment on life, an exploration of some facet of living; nor is it any renunciation of the immense contributions of theories of realism to say that a novel or short story may be the *exploration* of an idea by means of a concrete illustration. Even the most naturalistic novel invites us to *contemplate* the workings of character helpless in the grip of impersonal forces. The idea, then, even though it should be left to emerge from a tale honestly told and not dictated by it, is the

theme—which is not the same as a *thesis*. The novel exists, not as a theme, but as a kind of prolonged parable to point up, consider, or explore that theme, leaving approval or disapproval for the reader's judgment and interpretation. The essential, for the novelist, is to state the problem with clarity and honesty. Thus, though the line that separates the didactic from the wholly objective may not be razor-sharp, the distinction is preserved. The amateur novel will betray the variety of existence for predigested platitude; or, as Camus will show us, will condemn the richness of humanity for not submitting to the chains of rigid abstraction or thesis.

Critics have not been slow to see Camus as skirting the perils of didacticism. He began his career as literary man with a philosophical essay, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942), of which his first novel, *L'Etranger*, of the same year, was in part a fictional exposition. Between these two books and his next novel, *La Peste* or *The Plague*, five years intervened, years of war and underground resistance, and of immense significance to his own development.

Camus was still in his twenties when he wrote *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*. Born in 1914, and losing his father in the same year in the Battle of the Marne, Camus knew a childhood of severe poverty and sober study. A major in philosophy, a siege of tuberculosis, a remove to Paris, and contacts with communism and existentialism—these cannot be ruled out as formative factors. Dominant in his two early works is his concept of the "absurd," the Sisyphean theme of the eternal round of *ennui*, poverty, toil, futility, and death. Sisyphus, forever rolling his burden of stone to the top of his hill only to have it roll down again for his futile renewal of effort, becomes the symbol of that which Camus has labeled the "absurd." "In a universe suddenly deprived of illusions and lights," he says, "man feels himself to be a stranger, an alien. . . . This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of the absurd."³ It is the moment of arriving at the sense of loss of all meaning to existence, the knowledge of the contradictions between principle and fact, between logic and actuality, the moment of feeling oneself a stranger to life, to others, even to self. *L'Etranger* is the study of a man isolated within this state, as *La Peste* is a kind of exploration of a refusal to accept the same state amid the communal horror and isolation of a plague.

For even in the ordeal of Sisyphus there appears a moment of

heroism. Even as the tragedy of Sisyphus lies not so much in the dreary round as in his *knowledge* of the essential futility of his existence, so the moment of heroism consists in his turning once more down the hill to resume his task, within that knowledge, and so asserting his humanity over the dead stone, resisting even while he conforms to his destiny. It is this moment of heroism, embodied in the refusal to accept, which we must remember as the first movement of opposition to the otherwise unrelieved fatalism within the "absurd." The tyranny of the "absurd," the refusal, and the rebellion, these are central themes for the parables of Camus.

Thus the Stranger, perhaps better translated as the alienated one or the outsider, is the epitome of the "absurd." A faceless, Kafka-like clerk, a modern man for whom existence has lost its meaning, he pursues his goalless routine under the hot African sun. His initial crime is that of acknowledging his condition, instead of, like others, denying it. His murder of an Arab who has been inexplicably following him is, in a sense, but a culmination of his larger crime, his total indifference. Certain facts emerge at his trial, facts not in themselves criminal, but damning, as in existentialist logic all insignificant choices become significant. He has attended the funeral of his mother perfunctorily, has almost immediately afterward sought out his mistress, and, out of boredom, attended a movie; and he has murdered on a Sunday, in a spot given over to communal recreation. These items, however minor, are sufficient to point up his irresponsibility and to prejudice any jury. He broods, therefore, in his cell, awaiting death, upon the universal theme of boredom and injustice, and so arrives at his first awareness of the human lot; he becomes, in other words, no longer a nonentity but one in the brotherhood of mankind. The novel is thus a parable of the "absurd" which unites all men in a community of likeness.

Between this novel and *La Peste* (1947) lie the years of the Nazi occupation of France and the underground Resistance. We can but surmise how important these years may have been for Camus. We learn that he edited an underground publication, from which experience, according to his Preface to a recently documented work on the Resistance,⁴ writers learned the value of words, how "charged" they may be, and how important it is to use them with discrimination. "Danger made classicists of us all," he

said. Such a comment is in line with a classicist concern for clarity as well as with a humanist desire to summon man's best powers in the defense of man.

Closely germane to our study, however, is a later work, *L'Homme Révolté* (1951), translated as *The Rebel*, since it unfolds the second theme of resistance. A closely reasoned book of over 300 pages, it compels here a brief resumé, if only for the brilliant light which it throws upon the theme of the earlier *La Peste*, the theme of resistance in the face of bewilderment, isolation, and horror.⁵ It was, said Camus in an interview in *The Reporter* (Nov. 28, 1957), a book born of loneliness and necessity.

The Rebel is in essence a protest against what Europe has become under the assaults of totalitarian ideologies, the degraded mysticisms of Fascism and Marxist Revolutions, masking as perfectionist goals for the historical future, and in the actual present justifying the murder and enslavement of mankind. History, says Camus, is set up as judge, punisher, and dogma, and murderers are transformed in its name into judges, before whom victims are adjudged guilty of their own murders. Crime, once individual, now becomes that which determines law; and this "outrageous relationship between persons" replaces the once proud heritage of humanism with the reign of inhumanity.

To this ultimate "absurdity" there is but one possible answer, and that is rebellion. But here enters an essential distinction in definition: for Revolution, the negation of all that is human, permitting neither free dialogue nor honesty (since the citizen must be prepared at a moment's notice to change his thinking as official power dictates), neither heritage, happiness, nor greatness, is opposed by Rebellion, which is affirmative, an affirmation of the basic rights of freedom and justice, the persistence of mankind, the protest in the name of humankind. "Fascism is an act of contempt, in fact. Inversely, every form of contempt . . . prepares the way for, or establishes, Fascism."⁶ But Rebellion is the assertion of the *present*, here-and-now value of freedom and justice, relative as they must be. It is an act within the Western heritage, the Greek preference for a "delicate equilibrium between man and nature, man's consent to the world."⁷

Revolution, beginning thus by preaching a "historical" perfection, ends by proving "by means of its police, its trials, and its excommunications that there is no such thing as human nature."⁸

But man can survive only in a world of reality, of man as he is. It is *absolutes* that destroy, the insistence on all or none, on silence or retaliation. To silence law and justice until the ideological end is at hand is to silence what small fragments of law and justice we have. Thus the philosophy of rebellion has also to be relative, admitting the limits of man as he is, his human condition, and therefore, for its own health, allowing freedom of speech and discussion, the continuous debate on the *present* condition of man. "Approximative thought is the only center of reality"; nor can virtue separate itself from reality without becoming a principle of evil.⁹

In the face of the huge total of man's sufferings, the individual can propose little more than a trivial diminishment of its presence. Nevertheless, our place is on the side of the sufferers, for the evils are experienced here and now, within the span of our own lives, and they are not to be ignored for some perfectionist future. "No paradise, whether divine or revolutionary, has been realized. An injustice remains inextricably bound to all suffering, even the most deserved in the eyes of men."¹⁰ Rebellion, therefore, as distinguished from Revolution, becomes finally man's necessary and perpetual warfare upon any form of suffering, especially that imposed by man in the name of ideological cruelty. "It is time," says Camus, "to forsake our age and its adolescent furies." But rebellion, for Camus, is not only a matter of intellectual clarity, but also "a strange form of love," since "real generosity toward the future lies in giving all to the present."¹¹

Camus speaks thus in *The Rebel* for a whole civilization, an age. Indeed, in a Foreword to the edition here used, Sir Herbert Read goes so far as to say that Camus has lifted a cloud from Europe, and has enabled it to reassert itself. The virtues of his work, says Sir Herbert, are those of an ancient Mediterranean tradition, the humanist *measure*, all but destroyed "by the excesses of German ideology and Christian otherworldliness—by the denial of nature."¹² Camus, by a work of intelligence, done in the name of mankind, has deliberately resolved to join the opposition to murderous ideologies, and to seek a philosophy not "given" but deduced from the existing condition of man. It is indeed an act of courage and necessity.

What, then, shall we propose as the major themes of Camus for which *The Plague* (*La Peste*) may serve as parable? There is, first, the Sisyphean theme of the "absurd," the loss of meaning to life. But, though a plague may be a sufficient *reductio ad absurdum* of man's proud pretensions, it is truly the theme of *The Rebel* which dominates in this novel. That theme may be conveniently summarized as follows: 1. We must, as decent men, take the side of the sufferers, for there is injustice in all suffering; and this we do, even though we know that our efforts are approximate and fragmentary in the whole. This theme enlarges with the novel, and tests one character after another. 2. We must define real love as giving all to the present, which act is the only valid way to labor for the future. This theme obviously rejects escape, refusal to aid, or the collaboration of resignation. 3. We must refuse, further, absolutist ideologies which condemn present man in the name of some perfectionist, but as yet unobtainable future goal. This theme, political in *The Rebel*, involves us here with Paneloux, the priest. 4. We must begin with the world as we find it here and now, and strive toward a balance between man and nature in present terms. This theme implies the use of science and medicine as weapons, however crude. 5. Finally, we must choose a philosophy of rebellion, which is not revolutionary (i.e., a denial of human nature), but is ameliorative and a form of love of man. This theme emerges in the characters of Tarrou and Dr. Rieux and accounts for their view of Paneloux. *In toto*, these themes sum up in a philosophy of humanistic naturalism, an effort to salvage a universal view of man out of the confused record of what he is, everywhere.

This is, indeed, to load one novel with a heavy burden of didacticism. Yet, though *The Rebel* itself is primarily an essay in political philosophy, I think we may observe how closely its major argument applies to *The Plague* with the *caveat*, of course, that so to apply it is but one approach to this novel's richness.

A bubonic plague, virulent, isolating, forcing men to choose between panic and courage, action or resignation, may be said to constitute an ideal setting for our author's preoccupation with the themes of futility and resistance. The novel may, of course, be read first of all in a literal sense, as a journal of a plague year, one not unlike Defoe's in its direct realism. It may, again, be seen as a kind of allegory on war, alien occupation, and concentra-

tion camps; and, indeed, reminders of the bondage of war hover over the whole book, though Camus gives but one overt suggestion for this view. On a more complex level, however, *The Plague* is best seen as a parable of the human predicament in general, and the plague as a symbol of all that harasses man, or assaults him in the very citadels of hope and despair, defeat or faith. The fact that a plague is less man's invention (like war) than an "act of God" makes it the more fitting as a symbol of man's cosmic dilemma.

As the story of a plague simply, the book is one of slowly mounting horror, with a wealth of medical detail which need not concern us here. We should note, whatever our reading, that the book opens with an emphasis upon the commonplaceness of the city of Oran. People go about their business, amusements, routines, as in any average city of Western Europe. It is a city undistinguished for architecture, scenery, or history, a city without promise of melodrama or tragedy; in short, one of unheroic, average folk.

Yet the rats emerge into the streets, and gradually the city officials are forced to admit the unanticipated. Yielding slowly to emergency, they launch a campaign to gather the loathsome bodies and burn them. Then human beings are infected, and, true to form, bureaucratic caution lags again; but the first optimism of "it can't happen here" wavers; and eventually the full horror descends in terms of isolation, helplessness, and a common human plight.

The overt suggestion of a parallel with modern war may be, as some have hinted, a minor flaw; yet, since it intrudes but once, we may as well dispose of it briefly. Dr. Rieux is discussing official caution with Dr. Castel, an older colleague. Castel has no doubts as to what the disease is:

Well, I know. And I don't need any post-mortems. I spent a part of my career in China, and I saw some cases in Paris, some twenty years ago. Only no one dared give them a name at the time. Public opinion, that's sacred: no panic, especially no panic. Besides, as one of my colleagues said, "It is impossible, everyone knows it has disappeared in the West. . . ." You know what they will tell us. . . . "It disappeared from temperate countries years ago. . . ." And don't forget: in Paris itself, almost twenty years ago.¹³

The alert reader will hardly have missed the potentials for allegory in the rats in the streets (Hitler's bully boys, for example), the invasion of China, or the life of Paris some twenty years before the 1930's. One might insist on further parallels: the isolation and the pest-camps; the "occupation" by a dread force, imposing its own routine; the black market activities of Cottard; the humble heroism of Grand; Rambert, the journalist, caught in the quarantine. Even the messages from outside—"Oran, we are with you!"—have a familiar ring (ah, Hungary), and Dr. Rieux dismisses them as "too remote." Even Paneloux, the priest, may suggest the predicament of the "collaboration" of obedience to orders versus the technical illegality of resistance.

The potentials for allegory are realized when Camus plainly states the parallel:

There have been as many plagues as wars in the world; nevertheless, plagues and wars always take people by surprise. . . . When a war breaks out, people say, "It won't last; it's too stupid." Doubtless a war is too stupid, but that doesn't prevent it from lasting. . . . A plague is not made to man's measure, so we tell ourselves that it is unreal, a bad dream that will pass. But it never passes, and from bad dream to bad dream, it is men who pass, and the humanists first of all, because they have not taken their precautions. Our fellow citizens were no more to blame than others. . . . They went on doing business, preparing voyages, holding opinions. How should they have given thought to the plague, which suppresses the future, movement, free discussion? They thought themselves free, and no one will ever be free so long as there are plagues.¹⁴

But let us view both pestilence and war as symbolic of the larger issues of humanity at bay. Then Rambert and Paneloux and others become pertinent testimony, symbols of an existentialist necessity to choose, and having chosen, to know the consequences. The burden of interpretative comment, however, is carried by Tarrou, the diarist, and Dr. Rieux, ultimately found to be the narrator. They are the voices of the humanist intelligence, acting without the assurances of conventional belief, yet committed to action by virtue simply of the spectacle before them.

Rambert, the journalist caught in the city against his will, may be said to resist his debt to the suffering. Defeated in his first efforts to escape from the city, he becomes sullen and determined to defy the authorities by any means available. "I am not a citizen

here," he tells Dr. Rieux, asking him for a certificate of health. "Unfortunately," says the doctor, "beginning now you will be a citizen like everyone." Rambert appeals to "humanity." It is not human to keep him from his wife in Paris. "You haven't thought what it is to be separated like this for two who are close to each other." When the doctor remains silent, Rambert bursts out: "No. You are incapable of understanding. You speak the language of reason, you live in abstractions."¹⁵

Yet Rambert remains, feverishly seeking illegal outlets. The city sinks into an apathy of exile. Supplies diminish, regimentation increases, no trains or boats enter, relatives outside are cut off, families are broken by hospitalization or pest-camp deportation. Feelings undergo strange transformations, memories blur, and despondency and a refusal to think follow. People walk more, avoiding others, though they continue to haunt the cafes; and there is much drinking, men staggering about at night "vociferating optimism."

Rambert pursues his duel with Tarrou and Rieux. He has reflected, he says, and he had been in Spain on the side of the losers. Man is capable of great action, but not of prolonged suffering nor of love. You, he says to Tarrou, are incapable of dying for a great love. "That's visible to the naked eye. Well, I have had enough of people who die for an idea. I don't believe in heroism; I know that it is too easy."

But Rieux interposes quietly, "Man is not an idea, Rambert."

Rambert leaped from his cot, his face flaming with emotion.

"He is an idea, and nothing but an idea, the moment he turns from love. The truth is we are not capable of love. . . . Let us wait until we are, and if it is not truly possible, let us wait for a general deliverance, without playing the hero. As for me, I'll go no further. . . ."

"There is no question of heroism in all this [Rieux answers out of his weariness]. It is a question of decency. That may be a laughable idea, but the only way to fight the plague is common decency."

Rambert demands then a definition of "decency." "I do not know what it is in general," says Rieux, "but for me I know that it consists in doing my job."

Rambert is still not satisfied. "You two have nothing to lose in all this. It's easier to be on the good side." But Dr. Rieux says merely, "Let's be going. We have work to do."

Tarrou, however, informs Rambert apart that Dr. Rieux' wife is dying in a sanatorium a hundred miles away; and Rambert impulsively telephones his request to join a sanitation squad until he can escape the city. The doctor accepts with merely a "Thank you."¹⁶

Rambert, thus, represents the man committed to his personal love; but his passionate outburst that medicine is abstract, emotionless, yields to the spectacle of a man doing his job, saying only, "Man is not an idea."

Paneloux has a more complex rôle. A priest, a Jesuit, and a learned man, he is the spokesman of a philosophy sufficiently divergent from that of Dr. Rieux to command attention. At this point, I see nothing to be gained by pretending that Camus inserted this figure without a full awareness of the implications. "There can be no goodness nor true love," he has said elsewhere, "without the utmost clear-sightedness." The fact that Paneloux suffers a bit as a human creation by being cast in the rôle of a meaning-carrier is in itself proof also that he is not attacked as an individual nor as some kind of official mouthpiece for a whole institution. For example, his argument in its broader outlines might, with small changes and in another country, have been assigned to a Calvinist as well, or even a pietist evangelist, though it is possibly less likely that either would have insisted so completely on being logical to the end. But the actual significance of Paneloux is less the garb than the dramatic insistence on an "absolute" such as Camus has decried in political form in *The Rebel*.

Paneloux organized in the earlier days of the pestilence a week of prayer. His opening sermon was dramatic, and its effect, says our narrator, difficult to analyze. Some thought it "irrefutable logic"; others experienced an uneasy sense of having been condemned for an unspecified crime; still others merely wished to leave the city's heat. To Dr. Rieux, pitting his limited resources against the spreading disease, a mysterious groaning seemed to hang over the city; and, indeed, deaths doubled with the heat, and discouragement spread.

Paneloux' sermon was delivered in a strong, emphatic voice:

My brothers [he began], you are in the midst of misfortune, and, my brothers, you have deserved it. . . . Since the beginning of all history, the plague of God has brought the proud and the blind to His feet. Think on that and fall on your knees. . . .

In the immense granary of the universe, the pitiless pestilence will beat out the human wheat until the straw is separated from the grain. There will be more straw than grain, more called than chosen; this evil was not wished by God. . . .

Behold, the angel of pestilence! . . . At this moment, perhaps, his finger is stretched toward your door. . . . He is seated in your chamber and awaits your return. . . . No earthly power, not even—be sure of this—not even a vain human science, can aid you to escape.”

It is a long sermon, but such is the gist, though it concludes with the offer of divine aid for those who will repent. In the meantime, Tarrou has offered to raise a group of volunteer helpers in the slums. Rieux asks him if he knows the risks. Instead of answering, he asks, “What did you think of Paneloux’ sermon?”

The doctor shrugged, “I have lived too much in hospitals to relish the idea of collective punishment. . . .”

“You think, however, like Paneloux, that the plague has its benefits, that it opens eyes and forces people to think?”

The doctor replies a bit impatiently, “Like all the ills of this world. . . . However, when one sees the wretchedness and grief which it brings, he would have to be mad, blind or cowardly to resign himself to it.” Paneloux, he adds, is a man of learning, a scholar. “He has not often seen people die, and that is why he speaks in the name of a truth. But the least country priest who visits his parishioners and who has heard the breathing of a dying man thinks as I do. He would relieve suffering before wanting to demonstrate its excellence.”

Tarrou, interested, presses Rieux for his belief. Rieux says that if he believed in an all-powerful God, he would have to cease curing men. But no one, not even Paneloux, believed in a God of that sort, because no one abandoned himself to that extent. As for himself, he “fights creation as he finds it.”

“Ah!” says Tarrou, “so that is your idea of your profession?”

“Something like that.” But, adds Rieux, it is an opinion held in humility. “For the moment there are the sick and one must help them. . . . I defend them as I can, that is all.”

“Against whom?”

“I don’t know at all, Tarrou,” says Rieux, conscious of exhaustion. But he goes on to recount his youthful days as a doctor, and his inability to be reconciled to death in others. Therefore,

he has concluded that it is better to fight it with all his strength, without raising his eyes toward a silent heaven.

"But," says Tarrou, "your victories are always temporary."

"Always, I know. That is no reason to cease fighting." Nevertheless, he admits that the plague is "an interminable defeat."

"Who taught you all this, doctor?" Tarrou asks, after reflection.

The answer came without hesitation. "Suffering."¹⁸

During the grim days, Dr. Castel labors to find a local serum, the old clerk Grand keeps records for the sanitary squads, others drive the vehicles of the dead to the common pits, and still others labor at sanitation in the slums. Tarrou finally asks Paneloux to join in their efforts, and the priest, after a moment's hesitation, accepts. "I am glad of it," says Rieux. "I am glad to know that he is better than his sermon."

But the issue is far from joined yet. As the dry, dusty August wind rises over the "lost island of the damned," the plague impartially attacks wealthy and poor, jailers and jailed. Castel has finally some hope in his serum, and decides to try it on Judge Othon's little son, who is doomed as it is. But alas, the child suffers horribly, hour upon hour, and alone, for his father is in the pest-camp. His agony is so prolonged, his wailing so unearthly, that the doctors and Paneloux seem unable to continue. To Rieux, "the pain inflicted on these victims had always seemed what it was in fact, an abominable thing."

At the conclusion of this agony, the doctor, stumbling from the room, turns savagely on Paneloux, "Ah! that child, at least, was innocent, and you know it!"

Here is a crisis in understanding, and Camus has not put it here idly; for it forces the issue of rebellion or collaboration with the Sisyphean burden of man's small span and his unrewarding struggle. The doctor apologizes immediately afterward, in the outdoor air, for his outburst. But when the priest says, "But perhaps we should love what we cannot understand," Rieux rises at once, shaking his head with vigor.

"No, *mon Père*," he says. "I have a different idea of love. And I shall refuse to death to love that creation in which children are tortured." Then, more calmly, he adds, "We are working together for something which unites us beyond blasphemies and prayers. That alone is important."

Paneloux, moved, replies, "Yes, yes, you too are working for the salvation of man."

Rieux, trying to smile, answers. "The salvation of man is too big a word for me. I do not go so far. It is his health that interests me, that first of all."

"And so I have not convinced you?"

"What does that mean?" asks Rieux. "What I hate is death and evil, you know that well. And whether you wish it or not, we are together to endure and to fight them."¹⁹

But Paneloux does not so easily forget this incident. Shortly thereafter he expresses a hope that the doctor will hear his next sermon. "The subject will interest you." The doctor does join the sparse congregation—interest as well as population has waned—and he notes at once something significant. Paneloux speaks more gently, and he uses *we* instead of *you*. He reaffirms his belief that the plague is a punishment and a lesson. He himself, he says, has learned more charity. He has also considered the problem of suffering, especially that of children. He might have tried to assure them that suffering would be compensated, but that he cannot do with assurance. Yet, he concludes, "A time of testing has come for us all. We must believe everything or deny everything. And who among you, I ask, would dare deny everything?"

It occurs to Dr. Rieux that Paneloux is on dangerous ground. And, indeed, he goes on to say that all suffering must be accepted as God's will. He admits the sound of fatalism, but, drawing from an old legend, adds, "Each one of us must be the one who stayed." It has not escaped the attention of a clerical colleague that a logical conclusion is that "For a priest to consult a doctor is a contradiction."²⁰

Whatever the reason, Paneloux' subsequent history is precisely that: his own illness, his refusal to permit his landlady to call a doctor, and, though he conforms to regulations by going to the hospital, his further refusal of aid. "Priests can have no friends," he murmurs, and dies enigmatically, and is recorded as a "doubtful case."

Surely, Camus has in Paneloux dramatized his theme of an absolutist stand which first condemns man, making him guilty of his own condemnation, and then refuses the measures of science and moderation. Dr. Rieux, apologizing for his difference, must

nevertheless try to understand and perhaps in some degree remedy what he cannot love. Suffering in the present cannot be accepted in the name of a postponed heaven. "There can be no goodness nor true love without the utmost clear-sightedness." Paneloux, being a man of integrity, has pursued his own reasoning to its compulsive conclusion; and the novel does not return to him again.

For Tarrou and Rieux remain still the commentators and recorders. And it is Tarrou, telling his friend of his history, who arrives at the theme of the novel in its simplest form. He was, he says, the son of a judge, against whom he rebelled when he saw him condemn a scared little man to death and then attend, as the law required, the execution. Tarrou has wandered over Europe, has witnessed political executions, and has renounced murder of all sorts. His presence in Oran is an accident of the plague, but he has stayed to record his observations.

I have not changed [he says]. For a long time I have been ashamed of having been, even at a distance, even with good intentions, a murderer in my turn. I have learned simply with time that even those who are better than others could not prevent themselves from killing, or from letting others kill, because they live by that logic. . . . I have learned this, that we are all in the plague. . . . That is why this epidemic has taught me nothing, unless it be that I must fight by your side. I know with certainty . . . that everyone carries the plague within himself, because no one, no one, in the world is immune. And one must ceaselessly watch himself so as not to be led in a moment of carelessness to breathe in another's face and fasten the infection on him. What is natural is the microbe. The rest, health, integrity, purity, if you wish, is the effect of the will, a will which must never relax. . . . Oh, Rieux, it is very wearying to be a *pestiféré*, a plague-carrier.²¹

It is clear by now that Camus is a sober writer, and one who does not avoid the consequences of his own themes. He writes from a Europe of war, concentration camps, and an underground resistance against the "rules of war." He can never forgive the ruthless marching of naked little children to the gas ovens, and he will not let Europe forget it. Such is neither punishment nor justice, human nor divine, and he will not be a silent party to it. One must be with the victims or the victimizers, call your victimizer war or revolution or divine wrath.

Yet neither Rieux nor Tarrou aspires to be either saint or hero. Tarrou says flatly (and it is Camus speaking in the name of a be-

leaguered mankind in a closely knit twentieth century world): "Can one be a saint without God, that is the only concrete problem that I recognize today." Put in more secular terms, this means merely, Can we not be decent, or aspire to a decent world, without insisting that first all must be of our own faith? Must we have no justice, no law, no love, until all are converted to complete uniformity and passive unanimity? To say so is tantamount to despair and a refusal to do what little we can, in human terms. Religion, Camus has said, can survive totalitarianism; humanism, civilization, cannot. Rieux answers the question with his customary reticence, "I have no taste, I think, for heroism or saintliness. What interests me is to be a man."²²

From this point on the plague retreats. Perhaps Dr. Castel's serum was of some help; perhaps the disease had run its course. One sign of recovery—and you may be sure the irony does not escape the author—is that the rats return to the city, the *pestiférés*, the plague-carriers, swelling the ranks for the next outburst. Tarrou is the last of the victims, leaving Rieux his journal. Rieux is at last free to return to Paris. Rieux, alone, watches the populace renewing its ties of affection, "the one thing that depended on them solely." He has, he reflects, "tried to share with men, his fellow citizens, the only certitudes which they have in common, love, suffering, and exile."²³

Leaning on his balcony, observing the plans for a celebration—there will be, of course, a monument to the dead—Rieux reflects that there is more in man to admire than to despise, that people are on the whole more good than bad, and that the vice is ignorance willing to pass sentence on others. He has not awarded undue respect to those who helped, for to do so would be to imply that such help is rare. On the other hand, he knows that there is no final victory; for he knows what the celebrating crowds prefer to ignore—that the bacillus never dies, never disappears for good, that it can lie dormant for years "in the furniture, in the linen, that it can wait patiently in the rooms, cellars, trunks, handkerchiefs and old papers, and that perhaps the day will come when, for the sorrow and the edification of men, the plague will rouse its rats and send them forth to die in a happy city."²⁴

Thus *The Plague* becomes a parable, a parable, yes, of man in the midst of his weaknesses, and in the rebellion which it is to be man, admitting his human quality and aiding his fellow-men

in the obvious and temporary ways, without waiting for perfection in himself or in others. For this is better than the murders which follow on resignation to injustice, or on some imperious ideology which relegates man to the position of victim for the crime of being human. Once upon a time there was a reasonably happy, average city, until a monster invaded it, breathing fire and destruction. Some tried to ignore him, some accepted his rule with resignation, and even made a virtue of their collaboration, some summoned their small strength and labored unceasingly in rebellion until the monster was subdued. Which was the better part? Let each decide for himself, especially as there is no guarantee that the monster will not return.

"The faces we see in the streets of Europe," said Camus in the *Reporter* interview mentioned above, "are the faces of men who know the worst. Some look braver than others; that is the only difference."

FOOTNOTES

¹*The Personal Papers of Anton Chekhov* (New York: Lear, 1948), pp. 138 f. Italics his.

²Albert Camus, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), pp. 156 f. Translation mine.

³*Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴*Germany as Seen by the Writers of the French Resistance* (1954). I have not seen this work, only the above quotation from Camus' Preface. Nor have I at this writing seen the book-length studies of Camus by Albert Maquet, Thomas Hanna, or Philip Thody, preferring to concentrate on my reading of the works here discussed.

⁵Albert Camus, *The Rebel*. Translated by Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage Press, 1957).

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 250.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 295-296.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 304.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 304, 306.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. ix.

¹³Albert Camus, *La Peste* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), pp. 31-33. My references are to the original, which I have followed rather literally, with due acknowledgement of my later reading of the excellent translation by Stuart Gilbert, *The Plague* (New York: Knopf, 1957).

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 73-75.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 136-138.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 81-84.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 107-110.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 176-179.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 182-188.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 208.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 210.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 249.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 255.

THE KITE

By ROBERT WALLACE

Fearing branches,
crash,
tangled sticks
and paper in the end,
the boy
held
a red kite up, flashing, into
the
sky
of sunny March,
up
the mile-high towering
air,
until it seemed
a mild
speck in the peaceful heaven,
parted
from the tugging, disappearing
string. Occasionally,
when the speck
rolled
and lost itself
in the feathery sun,
the dancing string
seemed
a silvered line
to pull him from the grassy
hill he stood on
on
into heaven.
For a moment
it was possible,
in such a world,
to trust forever in
angels
or the wind.

The spiritual dilemma of André Gide

NORRIS MERCHANT

If a reader is introduced to André Gide through *Les Caves du Vatican*, translated into English by Dorothy Bussy as *Lafcadio's Adventures*, he will probably get the wrong idea about Gide, and if he reads no further into Gide literature, he will certainly have no idea of the rich complexity of the personality behind this single work. Perhaps of all the major works of Gide, *Lafcadio's Adventures* is the most mischievous, both in the sense of being a rollicking book, at times uproariously funny, and in the sense of completely deceiving the public as to the author's real nature. *Lafcadio's Adventures* is probably the biggest joke of Gide's career, because in it the author, as he was fond of doing in more solemn works, played a trick on himself as well as upon the public. He laughed good-naturedly and often with pagan abandon at things which mattered the most to him; he laughed about things over which he often cried without restraint. The character, Lafcadio, for instance, is one of the most erratic, the most guilefully charming, and the most ridiculous person it is possible to come across in literature. It is hard not to laugh at Lafcadio's merciless penknifing of his own thigh for what he regards as his own lapses in discipline, a very personal discipline that is the enemy not of pleasure but of letting other people take advantage of you; in fact Lafcadio himself enjoys the mimicry of the whole business:

As soon as Julius had turned the corner of the passage, Lafcadio pushed to the door and bolted it. He ran to the drawer, pulled out the pocket-book, opened it at the last tell-tale page and just at the place where he had left off several months before, he wrote in pencil in a large hand, sloping defiantly backwards and very unlike the former:

For having let Olibrius poke his dirty nose into this book . . . 1 punta.

He took a penknife out of his pocket; its blade had been sharpened away until nothing was left of it but a short point like a stiletto, which he passed over the flame of a match and then thrust through his trouser pocket, straight into his thigh. In spite of himself he made a

grimace. But he was still not satisfied. Leaning upon the table, without sitting down, he again wrote just below the last sentence:

And for having shown him that I knew it . . . 2 punte.¹

But the problem of how to be a truly "free" man, the problem of how to transcend the bonds of morality and the bonds of sentiment, the problem out of which the enchantingly amoral sprite Lafcadio grew, was a painful, vexing one to Gide. Gide had not stopped searching moral questions, looking seriously for a way to live, even in the laughter and mockery of Lafcadio. He led Lafcadio to commit the gratuitous immoral act, the perfectly motiveless crime. He created the saint in reverse, for while the saint performs good works, in the highest degree of sanctity, not out of hope of salvation or fear of hell, but out of the love of God, so Lafcadio performed his bad work, a murder, not out of vengeance or ambition, but out of carefully planned play. His murder was a raw, spontaneous act, justified under his peculiarly free conscience because it was not required, because it was pure "creation." Lafcadio was the kind of person who carried dice with him wherever he went, so that he could easily determine what he should do. In this way his acts attained a "freedom" from ends, constraints, plans, and purposes, a "freedom" that haunted his creator, Gide, who was given to adjusting his life always in search of a freedom to be a self he did not know how to be. *Lafcadio's Adventures* came in a burst of almost shocking laughter, but it was a nightmare.

Lafcadio's Adventures was in addition a delightful attack on Catholicism and the papacy. The office of the pope is subjected to the needling eye of a laughing critic who creates a vast "Vatican swindle"—an efficient underworld army deludes scores of wealthy and pious Catholics into believing that the Freemasons have taken captive the genuine Pope and put a pretender in his place. Only the Freemasons could be blamed, this army tells the gullible Catholics, for the insidiously radical nature of the encyclicals coming from the current alleged Pope (a reference of course to the amazingly liberal-democratic encyclicals of Leo XIII). Papal dignity and infallibility suffer badly in the scenes in which the vulgar, underworld impostor pope cavorts in a Naples shanty before a stupid Catholic who is convinced that this criminal is the genuine article. Thus Gide seems to be having great fun at the

Church's expense, when once again the truth is that he is attacking one side of his own nature rather than an institution outside himself which he despises. In fact there can be little doubt but that Gide's insistence on ravaging the Church in his satire proceeded out of an overwhelming desire to put the Church in her place before she captured him. A few years later when one of Gide's closest friends, Henri Ghéon, entered the Church, Gide wrote to him, "I embrace you, you who have preceded me."² He then recorded in his *Journals* a dream he had had a year before about Ghéon:

I was walking, or rather *floating*, beside someone whom I soon recognized to be Ghéon. Together we were advancing in an unknown countryside, a sort of wooded valley; we were advancing with delight. The valley constantly became narrower and more beautiful and my delight was reaching its height when my companion suddenly stopped and, touching my forearm, exclaimed: "No farther! Henceforth between us there is *that*." He did not point at anything but, lowering my eyes, I made out a rosary hanging from his wrist, and I suddenly awoke in unbearable anguish.³

Moreover, Gide's voluminous, recorded correspondence with Paul Claudel made very clear that Gide was both strongly attracted and repelled by a Catholicism painted in breathtaking passion by Claudel, himself a convert.

At the time he finished *Lafcadio's Adventures*, in 1912, he had not passed the "crisis stage" of his attraction towards Catholicism, a stage that occurred during World War I. He had written as early as 1910:

If being a Christian without being a Catholic amounts to being a Protestant, then I am a Protestant. But I cannot recognize any other orthodoxy than the Roman orthodoxy, and if Protestantism, either Calvinist or Lutheran, attempted to impose its orthodoxy upon me, I should turn toward the Roman, as the only one. "Protestant orthodoxy"—these words have no meaning for me. I do not recognize any *authority*; and if I did recognize one, it would be that of the Church.⁴

But because Gide's whole life was not just a free man's life, but a joust with authority in an attempt to unseat authorities within himself, he had to take arms against the Church. And a Catholic like Claudel could recognize, as Claudel did in a statement made

to Jacques Rivière, the really sinister quality of *Lafcadio's Adventures*, in which the fantastic and funny characters act out a moral drama of desperate seriousness.⁵ In fact even the normally satirical dialogue of the book rises at times to high seriousness, betraying the author's real dilemma, as in this statement about Geneviève, who loves Lafcadio, in which the author is hardly laughing:

But how can she tell him that she too, up till to-day, has been living and moving in a dream—a dream from which she escapes only now and then among her poor children at the hospital, where, binding up their wounds in sober earnestness, she does seem sometimes to be brought into contact with a little reality—a petty dream, in which her parents move beside her, hedged in by all the ludicrous conventions of their world—and that she can never succeed in taking any of it seriously, either their behaviour or their opinions, or their ambitions or their principles, or indeed, their persons themselves?⁶

The point is that Gide, even in this most affected, most contrived and artful book of his career, this one supreme exception to the usual intense, restrained, and solemn prose in which he explored moral questions, is even here dealing with questions of such personal gravity that not even the levity of the style can exorcise them. The irony that Gide accused himself of in his *Journals*, when he said that not even his guardian angel would recognize him in reading his first books, was a larger irony than Gide suspected, because a critical public, who lacked the intimacy with Gide a guardian angel would have, were to find that Gide's early works easily transcended irony. Even *Les Paludes* (*Marshlands*), written around 1895, a less competent, less funny, heavy-handed satire, was written not out of Gide's rational amusement at Paris literary life, not because he wished to laugh at its hypocrisies, but because he had to continue to "breathe" in Paris, to survive the inanities and suffocation of the salons, to keep from committing suicide in the face of it, in the face of a cluster of literary men who had to talk. Gide himself was a splendid listener, but like Rousseau he was appalled to listen to the fatuities of his own conversation; so he turned into a listener, widely regarded by his friends as sympathetic but always cruelly offended by the unresponsiveness of his own position. And he wrote *Paludes* to get even with the artists who stifled him, just as he wrote his other

works to put things that threatened to destroy his personal freedom in their places.

What distinguished Gide was his spiritual complexity. All was not so simple as the legend that made out that Gide was demonic, the leader of depraved youth, in whose writings one priest observed "the fingerprints of a maleficent collaborator." But that legend persisted during the decade of the 1920's. The personally reserved and deferential Gide was the same Gide who wrote in his diary, "With me tears are not the privilege of sorrow, but also of admiration, of emotion, of a brusque and violent sympathy, of excessive joy. I cannot remember ever having wept, since childhood, for a personal sorrow, and yet I weep so easily; in the theater the mere name of Agamemnon is enough: I weep torrents."⁷ This same Gide was the object of a critical onslaught described by Justin O'Brien:

The brunt of the offensive was directed at Gide's "baneful" influence. He was accused of being a destructive spirit (although he claimed to be destroying only what was already falling in ruins), of forming a vain and deliquescent generation, of relaxing the morals of an already disoriented epoch, and in general of being responsible for the bankruptcy of post-war youth. In brief, he became the scapegoat for everything in the restless age of the twenties—such as the romanticism of adolescence, the cult of unrest, and the aesthetic anarchy of surrealism—which moralists deplored. Hardly a crime was committed in France, or in Europe for that matter, by some pathological youth without Lafcadio's name being mentioned in the press, coupled with the magic formula "*acte gratuit*." One critic even linked Gide with the infamous Loeb-Leopold case in Chicago.⁸

Gide himself wrote in his diary under the heading "Literature and Ethics" a statement of Goethe's: "'There are no crimes, however great, that on certain days I have not felt capable of committing. . . . The greatest minds are also the most capable of great crimes, which they generally do not commit, because of wisdom, because of love, or because they would limit themselves by so doing.'"⁹ Because of this, Gide, although he never committed a great crime, was accused of encouraging others to commit hideous crimes. His personal reluctance to engage in crime was merely the difference between *agir* and *faire agir*, it was argued.

This interpretation of Gide's influence was fostered by an article by him in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* of 1919, relating an

incident which had occurred in 1904, and called "Conversation with a German a Few Years before the War." In it a German, who had just been released from prison, argued with Gide the necessity for violent action: "Action is what I want. Yes, the most intense action . . . even to murder." Gide then explained his own reluctance to act: "I am afraid, I beg you to understand me aright, to compromise myself. I mean, to limit by what I do what I might do. Thinking that because I have done this I shall never be able to do *that* becomes unbearable. I prefer *making others act* to acting myself."¹⁰

But it would be hard to imagine how the "others" could act at all consistently on the basis of the challenge of André Gide's art. For they would be interminable intellectual and spiritual adventurers, as restless as Gide always confessed himself to be, wandering among the phenomena of art and the spirit without ever being content with any one path. It is understandable how a disciple of Gide could content himself to following and imitating *one* Gide, enthroning in his mind the words of *one* side of Gide's oscillating character and adhering to an ideal that would have to fall a long way short of the whole, complex man. It is conceivable that generations of the young might be continually inspired by the ideal of a great rebel of the senses, an artist who preached the need for immoralism, for a concentrated attack on the hallowed values of the Christian tradition, for sexual revolt. It is conceivable that the man who, critics notwithstanding, was preaching in a classic purity of style that the family must be destroyed might be idolized by youth overcome by the romance of the idea of free love and pansexuality. There would be nothing surprising in finding, on the wall of the young intellectual at the tide of his revolt, a portrait of André Gide, who had proclaimed, "My function is to disturb."

But the followers of Gide the rebel, Gide the emancipator of the senses, Gide the creator of Lafcadio and gratuitous immorality, were followers only of one-half of Gide or of one-fourth of him. If they breathlessly awaited the next book of their master, they were likely to be disappointed a good deal of the time. In fact, if they withstood the difficulties, and, to a real immoralist the effronteries, of some of the books Gide continued to produce, they would perhaps desert Gide for a more loyal evangel of Satan. For Gide, whose Calvinist upbringing had instilled in him a reverence and

an awe for, and an awareness of the personal presence of God, placed himself on the side of religion at least part of the time. His sense of deep guilt periodically persuaded him to return to the spiritual riches he had appeared to spurn in his embraces of immoralism. If Gide wrote in his *Journal*, early in 1891, "My mind is becoming voluptuously impious and pagan. I must exaggerate that tendency," he was writing by Christmas of the same year:

We are restless only when separated from God, and only in him do we rest, for he is what changeth not.

We must desire only God, for all things will pass before our desire for them is sated, or else they will remain when we no longer desire them.

These false goods deceive us; we cease to seek God because we fail to see that we are poor. We think ourselves rich because they are numerous; we have so many we cannot even count them. . . . There is only one possession that can make us rich: God. And since this possession is unique, we know very well when we do or do not possess it. It is easily counted; it is unique and yet it fills us, and that is why it rests us. O God, when wilt thou fill me wholly?¹¹

If Gide wrote *The Immoralist* in 1902, he answered it with *Strait Is The Gate* in 1909; if he wrote *Corydon*, a defense of homosexuality published in 1924, and if he made shocking confessions in *If It Die*, 1926, he also published in 1926 his little notebook of mystical prayer, in which he called upon God's "lightning love" to "consume or vitrify all the opacity of my flesh, everything mortal that I drag after me!"¹² Thus a judicious selection of Gide literature can construct any one of a number of André Gides. A knowledge of Gide proceeding wholly from *Strait Is The Gate*, *The Pastoral Symphony*, *Numquid et Tu*, and many of the more prayerfully introspective entries into his *Journals* produces an image of one of the most important religious writers of the twentieth century, a man who would certainly be called, considering the prevalent loose use of the word, a mystic. *Marshlands* and *Lafcadio's Adventures* point to the André Gide who is a satirist, who is clearly trying for laughter and, in the latter work, succeeding. *Fruits of the Earth*, on the other hand, is the work of an artist taking the whole creation of the senses quite seriously; its individualist author, reminiscent of Whitman, glorifies experience, takes every joy into himself, and bids his readers to seek out their

own natures and throw away his book. In *If It Die, Et Nunc Manet in Te*, and the *Journals*, a neurotic self-deceiver with a mania for confessing himself and for achieving a sincerity that forever eludes him stands forth. In *The Immoralist* an artist who is the partisan of the individual rebel is revealed. In *New Fruits of the Earth*, the pleader for social redemption whose religion, now, in 1930, is communism. And if *Corydon*, the book Gide considered his most important, is taken alone, André Gide becomes a pagan homosexual, a special pleader, arguing strongly from cultural history and biology for the acceptance of the deviation he cannot help but practice.

Gide wrote, in the *Journal of The Counterfeiters*, "In life . . . the thoughts and emotions of others dwell in me; my heart beats only through sympathy. This is what makes any discussion so difficult for me. I immediately abandon *my* point of view. I get away from myself—and so be it."¹³ This was the central problem of Gide's art and life, though Gide was unable to state the problem correctly. He *should* have said not that the thoughts of others dwell in Gide but that Gide is always intruding his own self-knowledge into the thoughts and emotions of others, so that those others do not exist in their own right. They become, for Gide, subjective "other-Gides" whom he is incapable of realizing as independent persons; he annexes humanity, one by one, into his own quandaries, so that in conversation, as in art, Gide's difficulty was not that he got away from himself—this he was never able to do—but that he carried himself with him into every new area. He remained speechless before his friends when he thought he should have been responsive, not because of an excess of sympathy for them but because of an excess of sympathy for Gide. He is as overthrown, as distraught, by the problems of his friends as by his own because these problems are transfigured in Gidean gloom. He is stopped at the border of objectivity by his own self-awareness, which steals into the characters of his associates and colors all of his literary creations as well. He is not, as he protests, filled with sympathy for his wife, who has been led, in marrying Gide, to forget the normal joys of marriage. It is not that his tears spring from an excess of sympathy for Emmanuèle in her deprivation as his wife, but his tears flow for Emmanuèle's lack of sympathy for Gide, her inability to appreciate her husband's joy in homosexual adventure. It is saddening to Gide that Emmanuèle cannot be

part of Gide and understand that even during their honeymoon, in 1896, it is necessary for Gide to consort with young men, to seek out male models in order to pursue his interest in photography. And if it is impossible for Gide to realize outside himself his own wife, Madeleine, whom he called "Emmanuèle," which means "God with us," who was Gide's anchorage in God, in tradition, in the ways of his youth, if it was impossible for him to realize uncolored by Gide the woman he had loved and known from childhood, it is not possible to think that the characters he created in his art will be free of Gide. Rather, they will be, as they are, living parts of André Gide, partaking of André Gide, fighting out upon his manuscripts his spiritual battles and moral dilemmas.

But because André Gide is a complex man who knows what it is to pray with fervor to a God who sits in vengeful judgment, just as he knows, until his eightieth year, the passing joys of an evening's debauch, the dying allurements of passing faces, because André Gide is capable of both these experiences and many more, because he contains and wavers between opposites, he is able to create a petulant, sensual, and strong Michel, and a pitiful and renunciatory Alissa. He is able to make breathe the guiltless, playing Lafcadio, and to animate a solemn and God-filled Protestant pastor. He can create the careful and humane author Edouard, and the lecher-pretender, Passavant. But none of his creations grew beyond Gide to exist in their own right. He has left no towering character who is timeless; he has left only himself, Gide, divided into many characters. It is not Michel, the immoralist, who matters, for we look beyond him to Gide; it is not the consummate man-of-action, Theseus, who is important, but the Gide who nourished him. The character that Gide was forever sketching—adding to, subtracting from, now brightening, now furtively shading—was himself. He not only was the hero of his diaries and of his confession, *If It Die*, endlessly revolving himself on the pedestal of his art to make sure that no view, no shaded complexity, no ironical detail was missing, but he was also the hero of his works of fiction, huge enough, he hoped, for them all, and for all complexities and extremities of the human condition.

That is why his big problem is sincerity. He must find, without wavering, his real self, beneath all layers of falsity and pretense, in order to commit that self to immortality. He wrote early in

his career, in 1890, "My pride is constantly being irritated by a thousand minute slights. I suffer absurdly from the fact that everybody does not already know what I hope someday to be, what I shall be; that people cannot foretell the work to come just from the look in my eyes."¹⁴ Later, he was to write, "I have in my body and mind all I need to be, and to keep from being a 'great man.' If I only knew how to deceive myself. . . ."¹⁵ So he set about to build and make known the man who was to survive. Sincerity was requisite. "A man 'in whom is no guile,'" he wrote. "I know no other which, more than this word of the Gospel, has dominated my life. It seems to me pretentious to say so. But, young as I was then, yes, that is what I inscribed in my mind. It seems to me today that 'sincerity' and the effort to achieve it *in oneself* are contained therein."¹⁶ He wrote this in 1931; and all along he had been perfecting through many works, direct and indirect, a vast spiritual autobiography, a catalog of himself.

The real hero of *The Immoralist*, then, is Gide, and Gide's long journey toward the end reached by his creation, Michel, his personal evolution as an immoralist, can be traced just as well in the novel as in Gide's more formal early autobiography. For while places and events are somewhat altered and rearranged in *The Immoralist*, what really mattered to Gide—the spiritual events, the moral change in the hero—are taken from his own life. In the course of *The Immoralist*, the hero, Michel, evolves from what he later discovers to have been a fruitless and life-taking existence as a promising scholar into an immoralist, exalting personal gratification and self-indulgence.

At the beginning of the book Michel is becoming an established scholar—academic society is taking him seriously for his *Essay on Phrygian Cults*, he is known as an accomplished linguist. His interest is oriented to the world outside himself and is centered in his absorption in ruins. There is no question of neurosis, self-absorption, or a delusional view of his relations to things or people. But this life is equated with ill-health. Michel has had respiratory infections which he has distractedly overlooked, but when, after his marriage, he is confronted both with the serious emotional demands of his new relationship and with the hazards of meeting new climates during his honeymoon voyage, the physical wretchedness of his scholarly existence breaks forth in tuberculosis. Symbolically, the hemorrhages in his lungs release the rot-

ten blood of his former vegetative and decaying existence. His tuberculosis and subsequent recovery are a trek toward a vitality Michel had never known.

During his recovery he felt that he was tasting the joys of the senses for the first time in his life. Before, he had been dry; now he became vital. More important, as his energy and passion for life increased, as he began to exult at the touch of the breeze and to glow in his daily accessions of strength from the sun, his character-structure changed: he became restless, he desired activity, and as never before, he prized his youth. He got rid of his beard, and appeared to his wife for the first time since his youth, cleanly shaven. Moreover his personality assumed a subtle brutality and selfishness which it took all the weight of his former excessive civilization to repress. He later discovers that his intellectual outlook has altered; when he returns to France, he finds comfort in the romantic doctrine that the cultural and moral refinements of civilization have eroded human vitality.

Michel's experience is summarized when he recounts how he accidentally saw one of his North African Arab favorites, the boy, Moktir, steal a pair of scissors from Marceline, Michel's wife. Michel was happy to see the theft; in fact he could not believe that his feeling at the sight of the theft was "anything but joy." And from that day on Moktir, the thief, became Michel's favorite. He then began to delight in the idea of transgression, and valued association with transgressors. In the light of his reawakened energy, his wife, Marceline, is pitiful and weak. She is incapable of abiding his endless restlessness. She is endlessly drawn to a home, comfort, permanence, all of the values that her husband now finds frustrating. Michel, on the other hand, is strangely drawn to the philosophy of the roaming individualist, Menalque, who says,

"I have so little of it that, as you see, nothing in this place is mine; not even—or rather, especially not, the bed I sleep on. I have a horror of rest; possessions encourage one to indulge in it, and there's nothing like security for making one fall asleep; I like life well enough to want to live it awake, and so, in the very midst of my riches, I maintain the sensation of a state of precariousness, by which means I aggravate, or at any rate intensify, my life. I will not say I like danger, but I like life to be hazardous, and I want it to demand at every moment the whole of my courage, my happiness, my health. . . ."17

And Michel himself decries honesty: "I have a horror of honest folk. I may have nothing to fear from them, but I have nothing to learn either. And besides, they have nothing to say. . . . Honest Swiss nation! What does their health do for them? They have neither crimes, nor history, nor literature, nor arts . . . a hardy rose-tree, without thorns or flowers."¹⁸ Michel, then, is reviling the virtues that pleased his former self. If he says he hates the weak, it is well to remember that he himself was once weak. Marceline understands the place left to her in Michel's new evaluation of things:

"I understand," she said to me one day, "I quite understand your doctrine—for now it has become a doctrine. A fine one, perhaps," and then she added sadly, dropping her voice: "but it does away with the weak."

"And so it should!" was the answer that burst from me in spite of myself.¹⁹

And was it not the same with André Gide and his wife?

The hardest thing for Emmanuèle to tolerate was her husband's ideas. If they had married before he went to Africa they might have evolved together intellectually. But what his ideas would have been if he had not been rejected by her and at the same time alienated from her religion, is beyond conjecture. As it was, the rock on which they split was religion, the foundation of their union. Her unyielding stand on what they once had shared made discussion painfully the same as between pious mother and wandering boy.²⁰

But in *Strait Is The Gate* Gide is forced to consider the other side of the question, to present the alternative to the immoralist in the passionate renunciation of Alissa. If Michel renounces weakness to glory in pride, in crime, in danger, in a fierce individualism, Alissa turns aside from the most splendid joy of her life, her love for Jerome, to a joy that she believes to be higher. If Michel seeks life, Alissa seeks death. Alissa is condemned by her faith to embrace an inwardness that leads her away from the living, pained by temporal joys that subtract from heavenly ones. "Good-bye," she writes to her lover, ". . . may God keep and guide you! To Him alone can we draw near with impunity."²¹

Alissa, in her journal, like Gide in his, is fond of quoting Pascal: "The only book I have brought with me is the Bible; but

today there sounded in me louder than any words I find there, this wild and passionate sob of Pascal's: 'Whatever is not God cannot satisfy my longing.'"²² Alissa, another side of Gide, is the mystic that Michel, the immoralist, could never be, as she writes in her journal:

"Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy. . . ."

Above human joy and beyond all suffering, yes, I foresee that radiant joy. The "rock that is higher than I" bears, I know, the name of happiness . . . I understand that my whole life has been vain, except in so far as it culminates in happiness. . . . Ah! Lord, but Thy promise to the pure and renouncing soul was this: "Blessed from henceforth" said Thy holy word, "Blessed are they which die in the Lord from henceforth." Must I wait until I die? This is the point where my faith wavers. Lord! I cry unto Thee with all my strength. I am in the night! I am waiting for the dawn. I cry unto Thee with a crying that wastes me to death. Come and slake the thirst of my heart. It is now, at once, that I thirst for happiness. . . . Or ought I to persuade myself that I have it? And as the pipe of the impatient bird before daybreak calls rather than heralds the light, ought I to sing, without waiting for the night to dwindle?²³

Gide's problem, then, in *The Immoralist* and its counterpart, *Strait Is The Gate*, is the ethical problem of the diversion of energy. Whereas Michel in *The Immoralist* is led through his restoration to life to an avarice of the senses, Alissa, in *Strait Is The Gate*, is led to an avarice of the lone spirit in her rejection of sensuality. Her physical decline attends her preoccupation with purity and the moral demands of her God. But with neither Michel nor Alissa is there the possibility of compromise—Michel must follow his senses to ultimate, selfish indulgence, just as Alissa must follow her moral absolute to an equally negating ultimate, death. Alissa had to be a worm trampled into purity by her God and Michel must become a god himself. And Gide must be both because he was Gide, compelled, as he admitted, even while writing the story of Michel to write that of Alissa as an answer. But he was equally revolted by Alissa, so that when the book was published in 1909, he wrote that he was sure he would not be able to use words like *love*, *heart*, and *soul*, out of Alissa's vocabulary, for ten years. To those critics who wrote that the Gide of *Strait Is The Gate* was a let-down, and disconcerting, Gide answered: "It is hard for them to admit that these different books cohabited, still cohabit, in my mind. They follow one another

only on paper and through the great impossibility of letting them be written together. Whatever the book I am writing, I never give myself to it utterly, and the subject that claims me most insistently immediately afterward, develops meanwhile at the other extremity of me."

"It will not be easy," he continued, "to trace the trajectory of my mind; its curve will reveal itself only in my style and will escape most people. If someone, in my latest writing, thinks that he can finally seize my likeness, let him be undeceived: it is always from my last-born that I am most different."²⁴

The key to Gide's spiritual ambivalence, his inability to make the steady *progress* of a pilgrim towards some kind of light or harbor, is that whenever an authority seems to be establishing itself in Gide's mind, even to such an extent that he must give great thought to it, he immediately forces himself to retreat from it. Gide cannot be pagan but he also cannot be Christian, in whatever form, because he transforms both possibilities into authorities, from which he, as an insistent, free individual, must withdraw. Gide's Michel can never, and indeed does not, talk with the spontaneous joyousness and lawless good time of Petronius, because to Gide Michel is an *immoralist*, who in the seriousness of his defiance of a code he accepts too well, can never be really free of it. If his rebellion is forced and urgent, it is because the code from which he recoils is still, for him, authority. There is no more spontaneity in the abandon of Gide's pagans than there was spontaneity in the personality, so reserved, that Gide complained of. For the core of his reaction to life, in art and in the flesh, was his recoil, a recoil into himself in the face of entities outside himself that, it seemed to him, might have overwhelmed him with their own independence, externality, authority.

Gide interested himself in social questions with the same frame of mind. As Léon Pierre Quint has written, "Gide ne s'est intéressé aux questions sociales qu'au fur et à mesure qu'elles se sont imposées directement à lui. C'est comme juré qu'il s'est préoccupé du fonctionnement de la justice; c'est comme voyageur qu'il a découvert au Congo les abus coloniaux. . . Quant à la famille, c'est dans sons enfance qu'il s'est senti enserré par elle."²⁵ ("Gide was interested in social questions only insofar as they imposed themselves directly on him. It was as a jurist that he was engrossed in the function of justice; it was as a traveler that he

discovered colonial abuses in the Congo. . . . As for the family, it was in his childhood that he felt encompassed by it.") Gide frequently confessed an inability to handle political questions. "I feel only too well my incompetence, and I feel it more and more while concerning myself with these political, economic, and financial questions that belong to a field in which I venture timidly, urged on by an increasing curiosity. But what I feel more and more is the inextricable confusion of these problems. Such questions are so complicated that the more one becomes involved in them the less one understands; at least this is true of me."²⁶ Gide refused to be moved to easy allegations, or statements of faith, or simple judgments, which were to be publicly rendered, claiming that he lacked the perception to assume authority in an area in which he had not specialized. Of his exceptional behavior in reporting colonial abuses during a trip to the Congo, he said, "(And on the other hand, if I had not kept that journal in French Equatorial Africa, I should most likely have brought back from my trip in the Congo only a few 'landscapes' for a new *Amyntas*.) The feeling of my incompetence long kept me from speaking of what was not *my line*. It took the war to bring me to doubt of the value of 'competencies,' to convince myself that a specialist can be wrong like anyone else and that I had just as much right as anyone else, and even the duty, to speak."²⁷ Even during the period of his allegiance to communism and his reverence for the Russian experiment, Gide wrote, in 1933, "I have already said so: I know nothing about politics. If they interest me, they do so as a Balzac novel does, with their passions, their pettinesses, their lies, their compromises. Everything is debased, and even the noblest causes, as soon as politics get mixed up with it and take it in hand. [*sic*] People get killed so that their blood may make utopia come down from heaven onto earth."²⁸

On the other hand, Gide felt that at the time the Russian Communist experiment had passed its revolutionary stage; so this judgment of utopianism could not be applied to it. Moreover, his attraction to communism obviously did not spring from an elaborated science of politics or from being absorbed in the proliferating system of Marxian economics, for Gide firmly denied having a head for economics, for politics, and certainly for the Hegelian ancestry of Marxian materialism. In fact, Gide's "in-capacity" for dealing with these abstractions was so exaggerated

that he was led to a further step of self-disparagement: "I have a tendency to under-estimate my merits. This is, it seems, so rare a mania that it appears suspect. People see in it pretense, hypocrisy, affectation." He then added the completely serious explanation, "Due perhaps to low blood pressure."²⁹

What led him to communism, then, was not its systematic intellectual virtues, its rationalist structure, its comprehensive dogma, but rather its humanitarian pretensions, indeed what appeared to be a form of the Christian gospel. "But, I must admit it, what leads me to communism is not Marx, it is the Gospel. It is the Gospel that formed me. It is the precepts of the Gospel, according to the bent they gave to my thought, to the conduct of my whole being, that inculcated in me doubt of my own value and respect for others, of their thought, of their value, and that fortified in me that disdain, that repugnance (which probably was already native) for all individual possession, for all monopolizing."³⁰ As Harold March says, "Gide could interest himself in philosophic abstractions only for so long as they palpably represented the realities of human experience. A humanist, in the loose sense of one interested in human nature, . . ."³¹

Communism, then, was a successor to the early Christianity Gide espoused and never got over, despite all his attempts to eject it once and all from his system through the healing medium of his art. Communism was simply one answer to his need for faith. Contrary to the image of Gide as an artist who clearly aimed to disturb and destroy, Gide detested an attitude of final skepticism. "Skepticism has had its day," he recorded in the *Journals* in 1924; "nothing more is to be expected from it." He did not hesitate to attack the devouring, complete skepticism of a doubter like Remy de Gourmont. As Harold March observes, "For him doubt was not a privilege but a regrettable handicap."³² Therefore it was with pain and only after merciless self-searching that Gide abandoned communism. In the summer of 1937 he wrote, "I care very little whether or not my writings conform to Marxism. That 'fear of the Index' that I used to express in the past, the absurd fear of being found in error by the pure Communists, bothered me greatly and at length, to such a degree that I no longer dared write. What I am saying will seem very childish. But I don't care. . . . That plunge into Marxism allowed me to see the essential thing it lacked." And he continues, "Oh, how right you were to see in my

coming to communism a matter of sentiment! But how wrong you were not to understand that I was right!" He still confessed an abiding kinship with "those who did not come to Marxism through reasoning, through theory, but through a painful need of justice and through that warmth of heart which is often indistinguishable from what the Christian calls charity; through love."³³

Thus, Gide did not hold to skepticism. He was always renewing a faith that he could not finally accept; he sought relief from the burdens of individualism in communities of faith. But always he refused the final compromise, whether with religion, or with the senses, or with the transcending state, because always he was raising a question from the opposite point of view he housed as well. If before his death he made the classically serene utterance that he had built a city which his thought would forever inhabit, it was a strange city, full of incompatible people, where sodomites joined saints in an atmosphere of doubt of the virtues of both. It was a city whose sun was some truth that was ever receding, a truth that it might destroy the individual to find out once and for all. It was a city built under the quiet spell of Gide's style, which, perhaps far more than his thought, will give it permanence:

The notion of perfection and the notion of a long life are closely linked. . . .

How could he fail to wish for a long life who knows that the new truth he is bringing to the world will not be so quickly understood, or even heard? He knows also that solely the perfection of its form can permit and promise his skiff to stay afloat for a rather long passage; and that it is important to preserve from rotting the products that are not for immediate consumption.³⁴

Nor is the city he built a quiet city, for its turbulent, divided, insomniac creator is ever hovering over it with the statement he made in his fifty-third year and verified with his entire life—"Hardly a day passes when I do not again throw everything into question."

FOOTNOTES

¹André Gide, *Lafcadio's Adventures*, tr. Dorothy Bussy (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1953), p. 63.

²Quoted in Harold March, *Gide and the Hound of Heaven* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952), p. 226.

³*Journals of André Gide*, tr. Justin O'Brien (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), Volume II, p. 117.

- ⁴*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 261.
- ⁵March, p. 208.
- ⁶Gide, *Lafcadio's Adventures*, p. 254.
- ⁷Gide, *Journals*, Vol. I, p. 187.
- ⁸Justin O'Brien, *Portrait of André Gide* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 301.
- ⁹Gide, *Journals*, Vol. I, p. 71.
- ¹⁰Quoted in O'Brien, p. 302.
- ¹¹Gide, *Journals*, Vol. I, p. 16.
- ¹²Quoted in O'Brien, p. 220.
- ¹³André Gide, *The Counterfeiters with the Journal of The Counterfeiters*, tr. Dorothy Bussy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), p. 405.
- ¹⁴Gide, *Journals*, Vol. I, p. 6.
- ¹⁵*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 108.
- ¹⁶*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 182.
- ¹⁷André Gide, *The Immoralist*, tr. Dorothy Bussy (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 85.
- ¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 126.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 128.
- ²⁰Van Meter Ames, *André Gide* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1947), p. 27.
- ²¹André Gide, *Strait Is The Gate*, tr. Dorothy Bussy (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 92.
- ²²*Ibid.*, p. 142.
- ²³*Ibid.*, p. 143.
- ²⁴Gide, *Journals*, Vol. I, p. 240.
- ²⁵Léon Pierre Quint, *André Gide*, Librairie Stock (Paris: 1952), p. 172.
- ²⁶Gide, *Journals*, Vol. III, p. 227.
- ²⁷*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 258.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 275.
- ²⁹*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 275.
- ³⁰*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 276.
- ³¹March, p. 311.
- ³²*Ibid.*, p. 315.
- ³³Gide, *Journals*, Vol. III, p. 377.
- ³⁴*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 263.

Notes on science and humanity:

an open letter to Edward Condon

Dear Mr. Condon:

I am an admirer of yours—and was pleased to find us cheek by jowl in the Autumn issue of *THE COLORADO QUARTERLY*. The occasion of this letter is the ironic juxtaposition in that issue of Jerome S. Bruner's "The Need for New Myths," your own "The Impact of Quantum Mechanics," and, between them, three didactic sonnets of mine, one of which, "Absolute Truth," has an anti-scientific bent. I was forced by that circumstance to reconsider just what I was up to—and I would like to share the results.

We met at a dinner party after your Commencement Address at Antioch College in June of 1957. And from that meeting as well as from your writing I know you to be not only humane but to have what some of us with tender feelings for humanity sometimes lack: the courage, energy, and exact information necessary to make our good intentions a force in the world. Your address concerned the urgency of stopping nuclear testing, and that evening you played a tape of a speech by Linus Pauling to the same effect. This past June Mr. Pauling himself was here; again Antioch heard the same message—but it is one which even at Antioch bears passionate repeating. The crusade against nuclear testing which has been carried on by a great many distinguished scientists is bright evidence that whatever "science" is and whatever "humanities" are, scientists are able and willing to lead the rest of the world toward concrete realization of humane values.

While I am sure that we (and I will include Mr. Bruner in this) are in harmony in all that really matters, pesky differences and irritations persist that sometimes make our views of the world seem incompatible. I was brought up short by Mr. Bruner's comment, "... we find our community divided. On the one side is the more beleaguered type of humanist, shrill in his denunciation of the sciences, their values, their works; on the other the anti-humanistic scientist." I had already read your comment on "Those people whose approach to life is so narrow that they have no room

for anything but appreciation of the so-called humanities. . . ,” and I knew, of course, that my sonnet dealt rather impertinently with reason—which has its most effective embodiment in science—as a means of solving human problems. It looked, on the face of it, as though you and I were exactly the bums Mr. Bruner was talking about, that each of us narrowed the other fellow down to swipe at him.

Well, the tactics are familiar and the debate is old. I am no philosopher, much less a philosopher of science, and have little hope of adding much that is new to the debate. But we have to enlarge our points of view, and perhaps some lay thinking, delivered personally, will help. Face to face, you are no more of a caricature of a scientist than I am of a poet. I suspect that our agreements are more pervasive than we realize. If we have more in common in our wrestle with ignorance than we have to separate us, if we recognize that our views, even where they differ, are not alternatives but complements, why are we so touchy?

Perhaps it would be good to start by asking why the humanities are to you “so-called,” and why you seem to resent your exclusion from them. An economist friend once remarked that scientists are *nouveaux riches*: they have all the money and equipment and required courses, and now they want culture, too. Certainly there may be an element of purely semantic jealousy involved in whatever friction occurs between scientists and humanists across the quadrangle. Some years ago it was popular to turn every kind of literary study into a “science,” and there are still those among us who struggle to identify themselves with science and the scientific method—for whatever dignity there accrues. Scientists, meanwhile, push such lane-switchers back into place, grumbling (probably rightly) that they don’t understand the first thing about science: they call accumulation of facts research; they are addicted to gadgetry; they are more dogmatic than any scientist about their method; they delight in making simple-minded, poorly understood analogies between their own work and respectable disciplines, like physics.

Just as science represents some kind of respectability for which such people yearn, the humanities seem to mean “culcha” to some scientists, who protest that whatever that vague commodity is, science has it, too. In this mood they talk about the aesthetic qualities of scientific work or thought (knowing as much, perhaps,

about aesthetics as aestheticians generally know about quantum mechanics). Since writers have become embarrassed by the term *creative* in "creative writing," for example—and have, generally, dropped it—the scientists have picked it up and are proclaiming everywhere their creativity and imagination. A physicist friend remarked that it required considerable imagination to think of a closed universe with nothing outside it; other scientists emphasize the apparent irrationality of science as though it were a cultural attribute, as a chemist friend quotes one of the queens in *Through the Looking Glass* on the necessity for believing impossible things. The passion of mathematicians for music sometimes appears to be a belief that music is nothing *but* mathematics wired for sound.

All these contentions are, of course, true. There *is* beauty in science, and something akin to the artist's love of design and order or, if you will, fictional or ideal improvement upon nature may be the strongest of scientific impulses (much stronger, for instance, than a desire for practical consequences or applications). As for imagination and creativity, the scientists win hands down. Scientists in our century, at any rate, have produced more, created more, conceived more greatly, than any cultural group in the world's history. I would, nonetheless, be amused to find a course entitled "Creative Physics" for the same reason I am amused by "Creative Writing." It sounds self-conscious, or, as the psychologists say, defensive.

Much of this struggle of the humanities to be thought of as sciences and vice versa is an amusingly confused button-button game of semantic upgrading—like the garbage man who wants to be thought of as a sanitation engineer. Amusing, because no one knows what is *most* respectable while many, pathetically, seem to doubt that they are respectable enough as they stand. Some fatherly man (I recommend Mr. Bruner) should pat us on the head and say, "You have nothing to be ashamed of in the humanities: you are useful, sensible, your learning is solid, your wisdom viable. And you scientists need not be ashamed: your feet are not dirty, you are sensitive, polite, of good heart; no one doubts your love of beauty or of your fellow-man."

A humanist is simply one concerned with humanity—but, opposed to what? Some humanists (mostly those in the humanities) are concerned to distinguish man from the animals; scientific

humanists seem generally concerned to distinguish him from the angels (or from anything supernatural). While both kinds are for the same thing—man—they choose to fight on different fronts. The humanities are “so-called” on false grounds, I grant. You are as much a humanist as I. In the same way, science is knowledge, or organized knowledge, and in this sense a poet or aesthete or theologian is a scientist, too. In fact, I imagine that the *science* aspect of science (insofar as that word implies inert, organized knowledge) is the least important or exciting part of the work of the scientist. Imagination, that filament probing the unknown, is more attractive to all of us than the impressive accumulation of what we have learned.

Our attitudes toward the unknown may be different. Religion (some theologians would disagree with me) characteristically personifies the unknown, giving it intention, direction, and the ability to reward or punish, to delude, to betray, to frustrate us or benevolently aid us to its misty bosom. To do their work scientists at least start with the assumption, I believe, that the unknown is a passive extension of the known, extended by analogy with the nature we know into the dim blackness, indifferently waiting to be explored.

But, as you point out in your article, this analogy with the known sometimes doesn't work. At such times the scientist is forced into the position I personally most respect: that of being ready for anything. Faith in either the animate or inanimate nature of the unknown seems to me a dangerous way to sport on the lip of the chasm; superstition or *hubris*, faith lulls us without warrant. I am inclined to believe with the scientist that if you fling a rock into the void, it is not likely to be thrown back. But I will take shelter, anyway; and I might be less enthusiastic than he about flinging the rock. So far so good: the ground continues solid; nature appears to go on and on; and tomorrow may prove likewise. May. And, also, God may speak from the next burning bush. It is not a matter for faith or logic, but for circumspection, imagination, and tender treading. These seem to me just the qualities of Heisenberg (the little I understand of him)—or of Robert Frost:

It looks as if a night of dark intent
Was coming, and not only a night, an age.
Someone had better be prepared for rage.

Mr. Bruner says we fear the false optimist: ". . . we no longer believe in the inevitability of uniform and unilinear progress," and while there is always the danger of being paralyzed by fear, there is also a wise fear, a healthy respect for the dark, which is a means to progress—if progress is at all possible.

It may be Philistine of me, but I don't quite see why progress is *not* possible. While it is true that we are technically able to commit horrors now such as the world has never known—and seem perhaps, as a race, rather too willing to commit what we are able to perform—I think we are meeting that challenge much better, on the whole, than man might have met it in the past. An old image for the outstripping of man's ethical nature by his technical power is that of a chimpanzee with a sub-machine gun. As this relates to my subject, it implies that ethics is the province of the humanities, technical progress the province of the sciences, and that progress in ethics is slow or impossible while technical progress is increasingly rapid and inevitable.

This distinction seems to me highly exaggerated. It confuses several kinds of progress. In a sense Arthur Miller can write a better play than Shakespeare just as clearly as your lab assistant can do a better experiment than Galileo. If there were not technical progress of a rough sort (I am overlooking the exceptions when knowledge is for one reason or another wiped out, suppressed, or misinterpreted), we might well despair. But the fact is that dramatists or physicists find out that some things work, some don't—and are able to learn from one another.

When it is said that there is no progress in the humanities, reference is to quite another matter than the development of expertise. The individual *work* of art (and, by extension, the individual artist) is customarily more highly valued than, say, the individual experiment or scientist (although, of course, we have what you call an aesthetic appreciation of great experiments and we remember with honor great scientists, too). Works of art are not outdated, because their chief utility is in giving pleasure (or intense experience) directly—not in leading to something else. Clearly this is a matter of emphasis. Both the art object and the scientific experiment are appreciated for themselves, and both lead to further developments. Neither function is unimportant, but only the second (which tends to receive more emphasis in the sciences) can be associated with progress.

Except as literature, art, philosophy, or history tend to embody or record ethical values, they have no more dominion in the province of ethics (in my view) than have the sciences. Ethics is a matter of people choosing—and it is everyone's business. It seems to me patent that people make better choices if they know more, if they understand more fully the consequences of the act they intend. For example, moralists for a long time told people it was naughty to smoke—and smoking increased. Hygienists told them it was dirty to smoke—and smoking increased. But as clear evidence concerning lung cancer increases, people give up their cigarettes. If the likelihood of lung cancer as a consequence of smoking were as inevitable and clear as a burn is the consequence of sticking your hand in a fire, people would be no more inclined to do one than the other. Not getting burned hardly seems an ethical matter at all; better to call it common sense. But, then, one might say that "progress" in ethics means just this, the removal of one question after another from ethical ambiguity to the realm of common sense.

I realize that I am being very simple-minded about very complex questions: that knowledge of consequences, for example, has many degrees and that the inclination to play against the odds is difficult to explain or predict. I know that such ultimate ends as virtue, happiness, such complex ideals as courage, honor, dignity, integrity, are less easy to deal with than cigarettes. I know that some people without much knowledge and intelligence often behave better than those with a great deal of both, that "instinctive" goodness often shames the sophisticated. I know, most discouraging of all, that consistent ethical rightness and common sense are intolerably dull and sometimes, even, affect the human spirit as downright evil. But I cannot believe that knowledge and understanding *in themselves* produce bad choices. And though it is flagrantly optimistic to say so, I can only believe that as the world is sadder and wiser since the days of Homer, it is a better world, too.

Mr. Bruner says we need new myths, and I agree that myths, fictions, models, clear the way for improvement. Some, like that of ether or phlogiston or the Master Race, are misleading or even destructive. Sometimes we mistake our models or myths for reality (forgetting they were something we invented for our convenience), and although such times, such Ages of Belief, are com-

forting off and on, they also lead to crumbling on the shoals of disillusionment. Such cautionary remarks seem to me appropriate as a preface to considering the myth or model of free will (which you refer to as, "That illusion, if it be an illusion"). Just as the world is slumbering into a complacent acceptance of determinism, the physicists, of all people, seem to be again unfastening man's heart from his dying animal, on what seems to me a questionable analogy with the impossibility of predicting the path of an electron. You accept the illusion, if it be an illusion, with a mixture of whimsy and courage. An exciting myth is being created before our eyes.

Please don't misunderstand me: although I cannot see much connection between the path of an electron and free will (and, perversely, find this approach to the question vaguely insulting), I am all for the results—all for the myth. I feel that the model of the universe (as I inadequately understand it) now being perpetrated by physical sciences—the model of right and left-handed realities, of indeterminate electrons, of truth within truths and an Angel of the Irrational stirring the stars, and above all, the model of free intelligence in universes of discourse oblivious to facts—is not only exciting and inspiring but seems really to promise escape from the various cul-de-sacs of modern thought. The myth, particularly of Determined Man, is simply discouraging: if we cannot help what we do, why try? It may be unnecessary (or even an illegitimate question) to decide finally whether the illusion be an illusion—but as myth, free will is certainly better fare.

Mr. Bruner concludes: "When we can come to appreciate the possibilities of change in myth, when we can exploit the degrees of freedom we ourselves own, then we shall be in a position to accept and cope with the changing world to which our policies must be fitted." He sounds like a mathematician—or a physicist—or a poet, each of whom values his fictions above his facts, each of whom relies on imagination to escape from, comprehend, and, ultimately, guide his experience. As network after network of fact has accumulated, weighing and entangling our spirit, despair has increased. We seem to be succeeding in finding out what we didn't want to know: that we are, ourselves, fact, that we are nature, and, well, why go on? If you are a rock, the best thing you can do is settle into a cliff and endure.

But the myth of freedom is being given us again—respectably—

from the hand of science. And the feeling in the air (or, at least, in my bones) is as when that first spark went from the finger of God to Adam. But at that point I must stop my rhapsody. Myth leads on to myth, and the heady wine of uncritical belief can bring on fierce hangovers. A detail in your article gives me caution.

You describe an aesthetic experience you had in church, watching the sunlight on the leaves and remembering the studies made in 1902 by the Cambridge botanists, Brown and Escomb, on the diffusion of CO_2 . Although your reveries must have been a distraction from the sermon, you were (I am struck) in church, and although it is impertinent of me, I can't help wondering what you were getting there besides aesthetic experiences.

The particular myth symbolized for me by the word "church" has not, to me, seemed useful. For you it may be. I assume you would not be there seeking semantic upgrading, that you would not be retreating, that you would not accept a model uncritically or adhere to it beyond its usefulness, and that the models you select would be for you stimulating and directing conceptions, not those that soften and relax. My uneasiness, I guess, about both this and the leap with which you arrive at free will, arises precisely because the vision of freedom you and other scientists seem to be offering is important and thrilling to me. I would not like to see it dressed in the old symbols or turn out to be merely a reassertion of a myth which has been largely, for good reason, retired. To put it more bluntly than is polite, I don't like to see scientists going back to God.

If they go *on* to God, that is another matter, and I will follow them in my confusion. But in the expanding and increasingly flexible, increasingly bewildering, and paradoxical work of the sciences, I trust that some of the old sturdiness will remain, that impotent hope or punch-drunk permissiveness will not lead us back from the chasm lip in an illusion of progress to say my pastor was right all along. Otherwise I should have studied Revelations instead of science.

I realize as I write it that this is nonsense, that your reasons are undoubtedly sound, and that I have no business quibbling on a side-issue of a fine article. It may be presumptuous of me, but I think we already understand each other, that it is artificial to divide us into sciences and humanities, that our struggle is to the

same end and our methods not only compatible but almost identical in ways we don't always see. I think we can give one another courage against our enemies (such as obscurantists or any refugees from reason) and our seductions (such as our vanity, our weariness). My sonnet was partial truth. The reason, which

... is equipped for self-correcting
(it makes predictions, but no prophecy),
it is an instrument for close inspecting
(although it has no visions, it can see);
although it has no values, it can measure;
although it has no hopes, it can advance;
it can be used to calibrate a pleasure,
but looks on happiness as a romance.
It can explain, create, control and cure,
and blast...

is limited reason, inadequate for both our purposes. True reason, the myth-making reason, runs ahead singing us on. I think we can—and should—make myths together.

Judson Jerome

authors

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ROBERT WALLACE ("The Kite," poem, p. 405) has contributed poems to *The New Yorker*, *Botteghe Oscure* and *The Colorado Quarterly*—Spring and Summer (1953), Autumn (1956).

NORRIS MERCHANT ("The spiritual dilemma of André Gide," p. 406),

is a graduate of the University of Louisville and has taught English in high school.

JUDSON JEROME ("Notes on science and humanity," p. 424) is Assistant Professor of English at Antioch College and one of the editors of *Antioch Review*. His poetry has appeared in many magazines, including the Winter and Autumn (1958) issues of *The Colorado Quarterly*.

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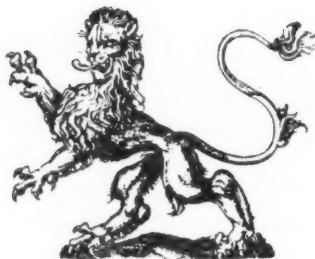
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